Class No. BV 4014 Book No. P21

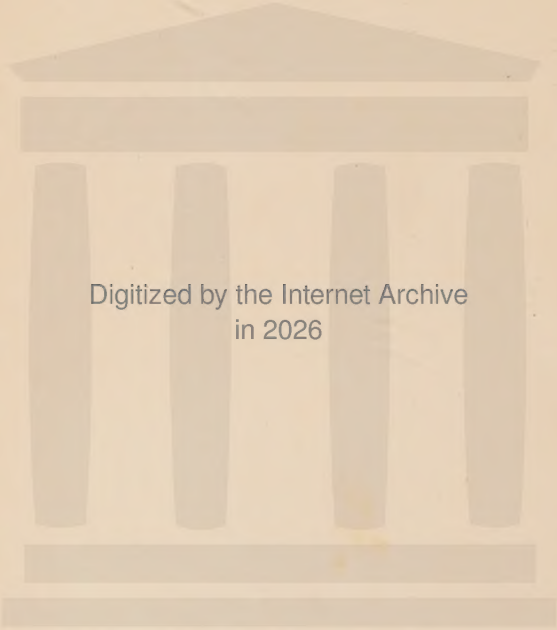
A GIFT FROM

THE REV. WILLIAM H. FISH

TO THE

MEADVILLE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

Accession No. 29782



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/voicefromparsona0000edwa

29782

A VOICE

FROM THE PARSONAGE;

OR,

LIFE IN THE MINISTRY.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

BY

EDWARDS A. PARK, D. D.,
ABBOT PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY THEOL. SEM., ANDOVER.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY S. K. WHIPPLE AND COMPANY,
100 WASHINGTON STREET.
1854.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1854, by
WILLIAM WHITE,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

STEREOTYPED AT THE
BOSTON STEREOTYPE FOUNDRY.

TO

SIDNEY B. MORSE, ESQ.,

OF BOSTON,

For his varied expressions of friendship, rendered not only when a parishioner, but subsequently to the sundering of the pastoral tie, when frequently the motive to generosity is weakened, thereby evincing the power of sympathy and liberality to produce sunshine and pleasure in a "Life in the Ministry," and make "A Voice from the Parsonage" vocal with praise; though in religious belief not in harmony, yet differing in the spirit of charity,

This Volume

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

WHILST with the ministry of the sacred word in this land of the Pilgrim Fathers are associated all the benefits which make life happy, it is passing strange that the people often suffer themselves to be deprived of any of the influences which this blessed institution of Heaven is designed to impart.

Prominent among the ways in which these influences are impaired is the frequency of change in the pastoral office. The causes that lead to such change are often the best evidence for demonstrating that the people have not profited as they might and ought to have done under those utterances of the word with which they have become weary, and which they desire to have cease that more welcome ministrations may be enjoyed. Whilst these causes, which are many, are being nourished, as they frequently are in some parishes for months and years, and in the efforts which are put forth, after a pastorate has become vacated, to obtain an incumbent *suited* to the sphere, it is evident the word preached doth not profit; for the seed which is scattered by the

sower doth not fall on susceptible soil, where it can bring forth fruit, "*some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.*"

It is the design of the present work to aid in counteracting this evil in our parishes, which has become truly great and formidable. By it, already, has spiritual famine been occasioned in many a garden of the Lord; and many a good husbandman, placed there by the glorious Proprietor, has been driven from his place, or has yielded to discouragement and despair, and sought relief in some less exposed position. Except the remedy for this evil, which is readily suggested by an enlightened and tender conscience, be vigorously applied, it is not pleasant to reflect upon the consequences of its enlargement which may surround our children and our children's children. Then it may have dreadfully marred and disfigured the church of God, and have made every form of infidelity victorious, and this land — which for the love of truth was sought after and obtained, and which became a goodly land, where the gospel for centuries had free course and was glorified — have become a desolate land, forsaken of God, and a place of idols and of every abomination.

Many months ago the plan and general features of this work were conceived and drawn out, and *before any other work, with the slightest resemblance to it,* was known. The author, therefore, feels that he is not an imitator of others. The same judgment, too, it is thought, will be formed by the reader, as it will be perceived that the general train of thought prevalent in the succeeding pages is upon subjects which are not imbodied in any other work.

Because a conversational, and not a didactic style has been employed it need not be supposed that the present work is a fictitious narrative, without the authority of facts and truth. *Had it not been for facts* the necessity of the work would not have been suggested nor would it have been undertaken. It is presumed that every reader who has had acquaintance with the course of events relating to pastors and churches for the last quarter of a century can readily call to mind cases corresponding to those which are brought to view in the present volume; and other readers, who may not have been particularly conversant or concerned with the history of American and New England churches within this period, will find it to be no difficult task, when the mind is addressed to the investigation, to gather a multitude of facts of as exciting a character as any which are disclosed in this work. The author feels that nothing but the *truth* is here presented, and that it is important that every lover of Zion feel such truth, and be incited by it to those efforts which a knowledge of this truth must suggest as being absolutely demanded, both that the fulness and richness of the ministry of the word may be enjoyed and the prosperity and stability of the churches may be advanced.

Should the pastors of our churches and those their friends of Zion who have long mourned over the evils which are in this volume portrayed take an especial interest in its circulation and commend the work to public attention in their respective localities, it is thought they would soon have evidence that they had been doing an important work for their own particular Zion and for

the completeness and permanency of their own particular ministry.

If in any degree the present volume shall contribute to the accomplishment of these objects, the design of its mission will be fulfilled; and that it may, is the author's most fervent prayer.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I. PAGE

ORDINATION, ... 13

CHAPTER II.

MARRIAGE AND COMMENCEMENT OF HOUSEKEEPING, . . 27

CHAPTER III.

HARMONIOUS STATE OF THE PARISH AND PECULIAR INTEREST IN THE PASTOR, ... 42

CHAPTER IV.

CROOKED STICK, ... 55

CHAPTER V.

THE PASTOR A MAN OF PRAYER, ... 66

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASTOR A SOUND THEOLOGIAN AND DILIGENT STUDENT, 77

CHAPTER VII.

THE PASTOR A PROMOTER OF BENEVOLENT EFFORTS, . . 89

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PASTOR'S ACKNOWLEDGED CARE OF THE YOUNG.—INTEREST IN THE AGED AND THE IGNOBLE, . . . 98

CHAPTER IX.

THE PASTOR A REVIVAL PREACHER, ... 111

CHAPTER X.

VISIT OF A CONNECTICUT PASTOR, ... 122

CHAPTER XI.

A DESTITUTE PARISH, ... 136

CHAPTER XII.

MISS BEMIS, ... 152

CHAPTER XIII.

AN OLD PARISH DEBT, ... 162

CHAPTER XIV.

SQUIRE DAVIDSON A DELEGATE TO A COUNCIL, ... 172

CHAPTER XV.

AN INCIDENT AT AN ASSOCIATION, ... 182

CHAPTER XVI.

AN EVENING IN BOSTON, ... 189

CHAPTER XVII.

A BROTHER'S TROUBLE, ... 198

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANOTHER PHASE OF PASTORAL LIFE, ... 205

CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNREASONABLE PASTORAL TAX, ... 221

CHAPTER XX.

THE PASTOR'S WIFE, ... 231

CHAPTER XXI.

VISIT OF MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT, ... 241

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REQUEST, ... 252

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MODEL PARISH, ... 264

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LETTER, ... 278

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DIFFERENCE, ... 291

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PASTOR CALLED TO A PROFESSORSHIP, ... 296

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DISAPPOINTMENT, ... 309

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CALL TO ANOTHER COUNCIL, ... 320

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OTHER STORE, ... 332

CHAPTER XXX.

REPAIRING THE CHURCH, ... 340

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DEACON'S SON, ... 350

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DONATION PARTY, ... 361

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PASTOR'S VISIT TO HIS NATIVE TOWN, ... 372

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PASTOR'S HORSE, ... 384

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LOAD OF WOOD, ... 394

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE PASTOR'S INTERVIEW WITH THE DEACON, ... 411

CHAPTER XXXVII.

REQUEST FOR A DISMISSION, ... 418

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PARISH MEETING AND COUNCIL, ... 430

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE EX-PASTOR, ... 450

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

The object of the work which this brief essay introduces to the public must be regarded, not by the Christian only, but by the mere philanthropist likewise, as one of serious moment. The book is designed to awaken the sympathies of men in behalf of a profession, the members of which render to the world a laborious service, and receive from the world a comparatively meagre reward. In furtherance of this design, it cannot be amiss to offer here a few words on the influence of the Christian ministry.

It may be said that every office and every art have an influence over men; and therefore the power exerted by a preacher and pastor is no very distinctive or peculiar argument in his favor. The genius of Robert Hall received no inconsiderable aid from the conversation of a tailor; and perhaps that conversation produced effects which no finite mind can comprehend. A single leaf from Boston's Fourfold State, found and perused by an individual in Virginia, led to the small gathering at Morris's Reading House, and to the preaching of Robinson in that house, and to the assistance of Samuel Davies in his education for the ministry, and to the subsequent employment of that "prince of preachers" in the vicinity of that same reading house, and to the long-continued results of his labors in the region which was first enlightened by a leaf from the Fourfold State. It has become a proverb, that vast influences result from apparently trivial events; but, from the circumstance that all things are important in their operation upon society, it were singular to infer that the Christian

ministry is not important. The agency of many causes is, in the common language, accidental; that of the pulpit is the uniform operation of known laws. It is a prominent agency, attended with consequences eminently far-reaching. It is more direct, more uniform, more radical than other causes in meliorating the state of man. True, the influence of the preacher is not always tangible. He founds no cities which are called after his name; there is no pillar like Trajan's, no Coliseum, no Simplon, to remain as a specimen of his skill. Such effects may be, indeed, produced indirectly and ultimately by the minister; but, in general, what is stately and imposing, filling the eye of the million, and fit to be celebrated with bonfires and illuminations, is not the immediate result of his labors. His direct influence is refined and inward. It is upon the soul, is felt oftener than honored, but is certainly none the less sublime because of its intangible value. Not seldom is it too modest to be even discovered, or to be described, save by negations. That bad men are no worse, rather than that good men are so good, — that moral evil stops where it does, rather than that goodness prevails and triumphs, — is often the chief praise of the clergyman's usefulness. The father of our country displayed his generalship not so much in his victorious onset upon the hostile invaders as in preventing their depredations upon him; and sometimes a spiritual shepherd has had no success in aggressive movements, but his great and only honor is to have guarded his flock from the wolves, and to say, "Those that thou gavest me I have *kept*, and none of them is lost." We wrong the good man's ministry when we disparage it for its want of positive acquisitions. Bad as his people are, no one can tell how useful he has been in preventing them from becoming worse. The great parade they make of indifference to his teaching is often an attempt to hide their real alarm, and they are restive against him because they are held in by the curb. The bravado of wicked men is often a eulogium upon their minister, and their ostentation of sin comes from their very fear of doing what they boast to have done, and from an unwillingness to let any one know how much they dread the reproofs of the pulpit.

The preacher has an influence upon the *intellect* of his people. He presents to it the most enlivening and enlarging thoughts; and nothing takes so deep a hold of the reasoning powers as the series of proofs which he may enforce. The mind is invigorated by grappling with the objections that have been urged against the omniscience and omnipresence of God, the responsibility of man, the whole scheme of moral government. A sermon, if it be in good faith a sermon, reaches the very elements of the soul, and stirs up its hidden energies; for such a sermon is a message from God; is pregnant with what the mind is made for — the solemn realities of eternity; is prolific, if need be, in stern and skilful argument; holds out a rich reward to man's desire of mental progress; and allures, as well as urges, to an intense love of study. It is a book of mental discipline to its hearers, and its author is a schoolmaster for children of a larger growth. A late professor in one of our universities, who has been famed throughout the land for his effective eloquence at the bar and on the floor of Congress, says that he first learned how to reason while hearing the sermons of a New England pastor, who began to preach before he had studied a single treatise on style or speaking; and two or three erudite jurists, who dislike the theological opinions of this divine, have recommended his sermons to law students as models of logical argument, and affording a kind of gymnastic exercise to the mind. It is thus that one of the most modest of men, while writing his plain sermons, was exerting a prospective influence over our civil and judicial tribunals. The pulpit of a country village was preparing speeches for the Congress of the nation. The discourses and treatises of such divines as Chillingworth and Butler have been often kept by lawyers and statesmen on the same shelf with Euclid and Lacroix. Patrick Henry lived from his eleventh to his twenty-second year in the neighborhood of Samuel Davies, and is said to have been stimulated to his masterly efforts by the discourses of that thoughtful divine. He often spoke of Davies in terms of enthusiastic praise, and resembled him in some characteristics of his eloquence.

Working as the preacher does upon the mental powers, he of

course modifies the literary character of a people. Whitefield made so little pretension to scholarship that men often smile when he is called the pioneer of a great improvement in the literature of Britain. They overlook the masculine and transforming energy of the religious principle when stirred up, as it was, by his preaching against the pride, and indulgences, and selfishness of men. They forget that influence often works from the lower classes upward, and that, when the mass of men become intellectual, the higher orders must either become so or must yield their supremacy. Whatever operates deeply on the soul of the humblest mechanic will modify the character of popular literature. The sermons of a parish minister are the standard of taste to many in his society; his style is the model for their conversation and writing; his provincial and outlandish terms they adopt and circulate; and his mode of thinking is imitated by the school teacher and the mother, the merchant and the manufacturer. You can see the effects of his chaste or rude style in the language of the ploughboy and the small talk of the nursery. He has more frequent communion than other literary men with the middle classes of the people, and through these his influence extends to the higher and the lower. He is the guardian of the language and the reading of the most sedate portions of society, and in their families are trained the men of patient thought and accurate scholarship. His influence on the popular vocabulary is often overlooked, and is not always the same; but he often virtually stands at the parish gate to let in one book and keep out another, to admit certain words and to exclude certain phrases, and to introduce or discard barbarisms, solecisms, impropriety, and looseness of speech. The sermons of Leighton, South, Howe, Bates, Atterbury, and Paley show somewhat of the extent to which the literature of England is indebted to her priesthood. When Lord Chatham was asked the secret of his dignified and eloquent style, he replied that he had read twice, from beginning to end, Bailey's Dictionary, and had perused some of Dr. Barrow's sermons so often that he had learned them by heart.

By the influence which a minister's own mind receives from his habit of sermonizing, and which he sends forth from the pulpit and from the fireside, he often raises the standard of scholarship, and excites the youth in his society to a course of liberal education. Very much through the instrumentality of a single clergyman, living in a retired part of Massachusetts, thirty young men of his parish were trained for professional life. More than this number have gone to our colleges from a single religious society in New Hampshire. The Rev. Moses Hallock, of Plainfield, Massachusetts, prepared about a hundred youth for college. Dr. Wood, of Boscawen, New Hampshire, prepared the same number, and among them his two parishioners, Ezekiel and Daniel Webster. A hundred and sixty-two young men were educated by a plain pastor in the neighborhood of Boscawen, and about thirty of them are members of the learned professions. Each of these clergymen will long live in his pupils, and whatever may have been his own literary attainments, will produce, and has produced, a visible effect on the literary character of multitudes. This effect was not, indeed, produced by sermons altogether, but in some degree; not merely by their direct influence upon the auditor, but also by their reflex operation upon the preacher himself. His appropriate work inspires and prepares him for subordinate literary labors. He cannot fitly prepare his sermons, without feeling a stimulus to labor in the cause of general education. From his habit of oral address he derives a certain kind of directness and energy of thought and expression, which qualify him for exerting an important influence from the press. Had not Martin Luther been trained for and in the pulpit, he had never been so forceful and popular in his written essays. It was in no small degree by his sermons that he woke up his own mind and that of his countrymen. The literature of Germany and of the world has been animated and enriched by the results of his preaching. Who can estimate the intellectual influence of the Bishop of Hippo upon his own age, upon the Augustinian and other monastic orders of succeeding ages, upon John Calvin, and through him upon Switzer-

land, and, by the intervention of John Knox, upon Scotland, England, and America, upon Schleiermacher, and through him upon Germany? It is not too much to say that Augustine would never have wielded this power over the race had he not been a preacher; for his sacred calling stirred up the depths of his soul, and gave him a strength and completeness of character — also a venerableness of name — which a mere philosopher, even one like Aristotle, can seldom, if ever, acquire.

The minister's influence is obvious upon the morals and business of a people. He touches the main-spring of the political machine, and its extremities are quickened. Waking up the intellect, he stimulates to enterprise; refining the taste, he throws an air of neatness over the parish. He pleads for industry and method, — for honest dealing and temperate habits, — for good order in the family, and school, and state. He preaches from that text which is the mother of friendship and thrift, — "Study to be quiet and to do your own business." * He infuses new vigor into the counting room and new faithfulness over the farm. Where the true preacher is at work, you will see the fruits of his labor in even roads, and strong walls, and thriving arts, and a wholesome police; but where the doors of the meeting-house are left unhinged, and the windows broken out, and the pulpit is given up to swallows' nests and the pews to sheep, there you will find a listless yeomanry and ragged farms, thin schools and crowded bar-rooms. The history of a church is often the history of a town; when the one flourishes, the other feels its influence. More than twenty parishes in New England might be mentioned, where the settlement of a faithful pastor was the prelude to rapid improvements in agriculture and trade, the style of building and of dress, the complexion of politics and the whole cast of character. What one preacher does for a parish, thousands do for the nation. To the complaint that the ministry is expensive, we may reply in words like those of Dr. South: "The money given for preaching must be given away; if not for churches, then for

* 1 Thess. 4: 11.

more jails; if not for houses of prevention, then for new houses of correction; and it is as good economy to support religious teachers as to support more watchmen and busier hangmen — to raise new whipping posts and pillories." Even the history of the name *clergyman* illustrates the humane relations that subsist between the ministerial office and the literature, the morals, the penal code of the community. In the books of English law we often read of criminals convicted with or without "the benefit of clergy." This benefit was an exemption from the kind and degree of punishment prescribed for lay offenders, and the exemption was once extended to all criminals who could read and write. Still it retained its instructive name, the benefit of clergy, because nearly all who had any acquaintance with the rudiments of education were clergymen, and an ability to read was a legal sign of the sacred office. Hence *clergy*, *scholars*, and *clerks* were convertible terms in the old English style, and *clerk* is still the law term for a preacher of the gospel. When a man was convicted of felony or manslaughter, he was "put to read in a Latin book, of a Gothic, black character, and if the ordinary of Newgate said, *Legit ut clericus*, — *i. e.*, he reads like a *clerk*, — he was only burned in the hand and set free; otherwise he suffered death for his crime." It is indeed a sad feature of past ages, that the circumstance of having received a clerk's education should have released an offender from the punishment which he deserved. Still there is a pleasant meaning in the fact, that such an education was supposed to be incompatible with the grossest forms of sin, and that the term *clergyman* was regarded as synonymous with the terms *learned* and *good*.

But let us take higher ground. The preacher has been shown to exert an influence upon the perceptions, the business, the morals, and politics of a community. His great effect, however, is produced upon the religious character. We shall not be suspected of implying that he transforms the heart without the special interposition of the Holy Ghost; and yet there is a sense in which a dependent apostle may declare, "I have begotten you through the Gospel." Although the soul is in its nature percip-

ient, yet, when it has been quickened by the supernatural grace that often attends the instructions of the man of God, it exclaims, "Whereas I was once blind, I now see." Although its very essence is to feel and act, it may still be so much animated by the divine power which is sometimes given to the preacher's word as to confess, "I was dead, but am alive again, was buried in sin, but am risen, and now walk in newness of life." Love to God, penitence for transgression, faith in Christ, and the specific virtues involved in these, are the noblest attainments of the soul; they are essential to the harmony between the intellectual and the moral nature, and without them man can never gain his appropriate honor and strength. But these are the qualities which the minister aims to call forth, and which are seldom manifested in the life of such as are not hearers of the word. Pain, the evil which all men would avoid, and by the fear of which they are hurried into the very courses which end in what they dread, can be ultimately averted only by yielding to persuasives like those of the preached Gospel. Happiness, the first thing which man desires, and the love of which is essential to him as a voluntary agent, can be ultimately attained through the influence of such truth only as is declared from the pulpit. Not his own happiness alone does the minister secure, but that of his neighbor also; not mere animal or intellectual happiness, but spiritual; not for a day or a life, but for eternity; not merely eternal, but eternally increasing. He procures this inward, immortal, and ever-augmenting bliss for a soul that would otherwise endure an inward and ever-increasing misery. It is not one soul only that he benefits, nor two, nor twenty, but perhaps a hundred; and a hundred eternities, otherwise spent in the darkness that no light cheers, are now spent in the paradise of God. Of the hundred immortals thus transformed by the instrumentality of a single preacher, who knows but some one may be the means of interminable good to a hundred more? — may be a Fuller, or a Payson, or a Harlan Page, or a Mrs. Judson? Is it not a moderate calculation that a hundred faithful disciples will exert an influence which God will bless to the

spiritual welfare of at least two hundred of their fellow-men, their kindred or friends, for whom they toil and pray, each one, on an average, bringing two additional talents into the sacred treasury? And these two hundred Christians may impart — as parents are a means of imparting in a kind of legacy — their religious character to their children, and a thousand of their children's children may labor, each one in his own circle, for the renovation of other souls. Each one in his own circle of friends; and here are a thousand different circles, and each member of each of these circles has a separate band of his own associates, and the influence thus branches out into a new sphere, and will continue to widen and amplify, and to include still other multitudes.

It is well to reflect minutely on the manner in which influence is propagated, filling one area after another, transmitted from a few ancestors to a numerous posterity, and flowing on like a stream, broader and deeper, till it becomes a mystery how such great effects can result from a cause so limited. We should also consider the new impressions which are often produced by the minister's printed works long after his death. Many a clergyman never dies. If his name were forgotten, he would still be producing effects of which he is not recognized as the author; but sometimes a clergyman like Chrysostom lives and preaches, generation after generation, among a larger community of readers than he ever orally addressed; and in addition to the good that flows from the multitude who were benefited by his life is a still greater good, that is constantly springing up in minds conversant with his posthumous sermons. He is still beginning to put in train systems of moral influence which are entirely distinct from the systems originated upon the minds of his contemporaries, and continued, by the natural laws of transmission and expansion, from one age to another of their posterity.

It were easy to fill a volume with illustrations of the widespread and long-continued results flowing from the life and the words of a Christian minister — not merely the eloquent and the eminent divine, but the humblest pastor of the obscurest hamlet. But this essay must needs be limited to a few pages,

and has perhaps already suggested some hint which may prompt the reader to peruse the following pages, designed as they are to secure a more cordial sympathy with the man who labors for the education of his race in the noblest of all sciences, and for the preparation of the soul for the highest and the purest of all rewards.

EDWARDS A. PARK.

Andover, July 13, 1854.

A VOICE FROM THE PARSONAGE.

CHAPTER I.

ORDINATION.

From one of the beautiful towns of New England two sons and brothers went forth together, soon after attaining their majority, to enter on the active duties of life in the State of Virginia. These sons, by their mother, descended from one of those distinguished clergymen of which their native state has furnished so many, who during a long life was the minister of the town and parish. Their mother was the daughter of a highly respectable and affluent merchant of the place, and was greatly distinguished by the beauty of her person, the refinement of her manners, the intelligence of her mind, and the fervor of her piety. Their father was of Connecticut origin, but left the place of his nativity when a young man, and entered on mercantile pursuits in the town where they were born. He, too, was a gentleman of considerable education, was possessed of what is popularly called strong common sense, and was long confided in by the community as a man whose example it were safe to follow and whose opinions it were unwise to disregard. Such being the character of the parents, it is easy to infer the influences which would control the education of the children. It is therefore sufficient to remark that they were nurtured in

the fear of God, and with continued supplication at his gracious throne that they might each be beacon lights in the community to guide and persuade all around into ways of virtue, philanthropy, and general usefulness. Although it was the happiness of Squire and Mrs. Davidson to see some of their children exhibit the blessed fruits of the influences which they so sedulously employed in their education, they were not *all* developed in the sons Charles and Edmund, of whom the reader is now being informed, in the period of their history to which this chapter relates. Having been conversant with fashionable life, — for no circle was higher than that in which their family moved, — and having always known the blessings of affluence, their buoyant spirits had not yet been mellowed by the genial influences of piety. Whilst their parents prized them for their general dutifulness and saw no tendency to disreputable life, they had many seasons of grief because their God was not the God of these their sons. Nor were they strongly averse to all the influences of religion, nor extremely restive when these influences were tightly intwined around them ; but the mother, when every feature of her face was serious and earnest, as she strove with them to pursue things eternal rather than what were earthly, often found it extremely difficult to prevent her pleasant eye from being in sympathy with her lips as something more than a smile was seen there at play, whilst some unlooked-for pleasantry escaped from them.

From the character the mother had given them of their grandfather, before alluded to, as well as from the friendly relations subsisting between their parents and many of the clergy, and from the position their father occupied in the parish as one of the principal men, if not the leading character, therein, all their children were sensitive to every thing pertaining to the prosperity of the church.

At the period when the ordination we are now de-

scribing was to occur in their native town, Charles and Edmund had been residents of Virginia about twelve years, and had made but one visit to the home of their childhood and youth. Each had married and become a parent, and both had prospered in business; and Charles, by his marriage, had become exceedingly affluent. One day in the month of April, as he was sitting at dinner in his splendid mansion, he remarked to his wife,—

"My dear, I have had a letter from mother to-day; and, among other things, she informs me they are to have an ordination there on the 10th of June."

"Ordination!" said a little boy of some eight years, as he turned his sparkling blue eyes in surprise on his father. "What is that?"

"Well, Arthur," replied the father, "if your grandmother Davidson were here I rather think she would be surprised at your question, and would think that I had not endeavored to make you familiar with scenes in New England which are ever regarded with the greatest interest."

"I think not, husband," remarked the wife. "I think her candor would incline her to make allowance for difference in circumstances. She would not be surprised at Arthur's question; for you know our worship is different from hers, and ordination among Episcopalians is not a very common service only in the parish where the bishop resides. I do not think Arthur's question a very surprising one."

"Papa," said little Arthur, impatient at the digression which had retarded the answer to his question, "what is *ordination?*"

"Well, now, my son," the father said, as he put his arm around the neck of Arthur, "I will tell you. Ordination is making a minister."

"*Minister!* What is that?"

At this question both Mr. and Mrs. Davidson were nearly convulsed with laughter, which almost bewildered poor Arthur, who was far from thinking of provoking even a smile. As soon as the father had recovered himself sufficiently to speak, he remarked, —

"My dear, if mother were here now I rather think she would conclude there was no Puritanism in this quarter, and that I had abjured the faith."

"I really thought," said Mrs. Davidson, "that Arthur knew what a minister is; for you know how many times we read of the minister in the prayer book."

"I rather guess," said Mr. Davidson, "the boy don't read the prayer book much."

"Well, he hears from it almost every Sunday at church," Mrs. Davidson replied.

"But you know, my dear, there is not any thing said at church about the minister. What is in the prayer book is only direction to the minister to say or do thus and so. Arthur knows what a minister is; only he knows him under another name. He seldom, if ever, hears Mr. Crocker spoken of only as our rector, you know."

"Is Mr. Crocker a minister, papa?"

"Yes, my son; Mr. Crocker is a minister. We call him rector because we are all of us in this region Episcopalians. Where I was born there are a few Episcopalians. The great majority of the people are Methodists, Congregationalists, or Baptists; and they call their preachers, when settled, pastors, or ministers."

"I think you said papa, ordination meant making a minister. I should not think that that was any great affair."

"It is, Arthur, in New England," said the father. "When they ordain a minister where grandpa Davidson lives it is a great day. Much more do they make of it than we do of our Christmas."

"Is it any like Christmas, papa? O, I like Christmas; for then we see our friends and have all the good things to eat. O, I like Christmas; I wish it was all the time."

"I have been thinking, my dear, since I received mother's letter, that perhaps we had better conclude to make our visit at the north this season instead of the next. I should really like to be at home when they have their ordination. If you approve, I think we will go on, and take Louisa and Arthur with us."

"Yes, papa, that is good; do go. I want to go."

"I rather think," said the father, "if you go, I shall be under the necessity of giving you a little instruction to prepare you to meet grandpa and grandma Davidson. I must get some Puritanism in you to have you of good savor with them."

It was finally concluded by both Mr. and Mrs. Davidson that they would visit New England and be present at the ordination in the town where he had passed his early life. Accordingly, about the middle of May they set out on their long journey, and arrived at the paternal mansion on the Monday preceding the ordination. As no intimation had been given of the intended visit, it may easily be imagined what was the surprise depicted on every countenance as young Davidson unceremoniously opened the sitting-room door, that opened from the hall into which he and his wife and children had silently entered.

"Charles — Charles Davidson!" exclaimed his mother, as she let fall the cup of tea which was half raised to her lips, "is that you?" instantly rising from the table where the family were at tea.

"Why, Charles!" burst forth from the squire, letting his knife suddenly fall on his plate, "how you surprise us!" and, following the example of his wife, left his seat to grasp the hands of his children.

"And you, Ann," turning from Charles to his wife, said

the mother, —"how do you do? and, Louisa and Arthur, how are you?" as she rapidly seized their hands and imprinted on their faces a succession of kisses and variously expressed her surprise and joy.

As soon as Squire and Mrs. Davidson had given vent to their feelings and had relaxed their grasp of the hands of their visitors, the other members of the family had opportunity of testifying their love and joy to the brother and sister and nephew and niece. Among these was an aunt of Charles, the sister of his father, ever regarded by all the children of the squire with the greatest affection and respect. Being now greatly enfeebled by age and disease, she slowly approached the group, manifesting her great interest in the new comers by many expressions of tenderness and love.

"Well, Charles," concluded aunt Sarah, after having given her first salutations, "you will be here now at our ordination, Wednesday."

"Yes, aunt," said Charles: "that is what excited the idea of this visit, I confess. I did not think of coming on this season until I received mother's letter in April last, in which she informed me you were to have an ordination here."

"Why," exclaimed the squire, "did you not inform us you were coming in the letter I received from you two weeks since, when you were at Baltimore? I did not dream you were *then* on your way here. I thought you were there on business, and had your family with you visiting their relatives."

"I thought, father, I would not excite expectation; and, moreover, I pictured to myself the very scene which has been enacted here this evening, and I thought I should enjoy very much the surprise which has been manifested since our arrival."

"Well," said aunt Sarah, "Charles is Charles yet.

When he was a boy there was no calculating on his capers."

"There was no great criminality attending my boyish capers, was there, aunt Sarah?"

"O, no," aunt Sarah replied. "They were so different from other boys' that I was never exactly prepared for them."

The evening wore away while the whole family group were busy in conversation on various subjects connected with home scenes, and it was rather a late hour before resort was had to slumber.

The next morning at the breakfast table, the conversation turning upon the important event that was to transpire on the ensuing day, Charles asked of his father who and what kind of a man was to be ordained.

"He is from the State of Vermont," the squire replied; "and his name is Mr. Eldridge. He was educated at Yale College, and pursued his theological studies at Andover. I believe he is twenty-nine years of age, and comes recommended by the professors as a young gentleman of high talents, extensive acquirements, and ardent piety. He has been preaching here about four months; and I must say I never heard many better sermons from a young man, or sermons better delivered from any man."

"That is saying considerable, father," Charles observed; "for few individuals have seen more of ministers than yourself, or have heard more preach."

"Well, I acknowledge," returned the squire, "I am very much carried away with Mr. Eldridge, and am very happy that he is to be our minister."

"How is he out of the pulpit?" asked Charles.

"O, he is very sociable and dignified, and interests the entire family he visits."

"Is he married?" asked Ann of Mrs. Davidson.

"No, not yet," was the answer.

"He is engaged, then, is he not?"

"Yes," said the squire; "he is engaged; and I am glad of it."

"Why are you glad?" Ann inquired.

"Because, if he were not engaged, all the young ladies in the parish would be thinking of their own prospects for the prize, and there might be a door opened for trouble," replied the squire, as he turned a significant look at his youngest daughter, a young lady of nineteen years, who sat at the table.

Breakfast being over, and family worship having been observed, Mrs. Davidson excused herself from the circle by remarking, her domestic cares at this particular time demanded her attention in another part of the house. As she left the room Arthur followed her, and soon found himself in the kitchen. Here he saw many things which reminded him of home and of that particular season of the year before alluded to as bringing him many sources of happiness. As he saw what was going on in the preparation of pies, cake, &c., he burst out, saying, —

"Grandma, this makes me think of our Christmas; but it is not exactly like it here," looking about and eying two female domestics busily at work.

"Why is it not exactly like it, my dear?" asked the grandmother.

Looking up, as if he wished to reply in a whisper, which brought down the ear of Mrs. Davidson to Arthur's head, he said, —

"We don't have white people to do our work, grandma; we have black servants."

Mrs. Davidson pleasantly remarked, —

"Yes, Arthur, I know you have black servants at the south; but I don't care about having such here."

"Why not, grandma?" inquired Arthur.

Mrs. Davidson went on and told her grandson many

reasons for not wishing the labor of slaves; which only drew from Arthur the general reply, that his father's servants were not treated in the manner described, but artlessly said he knew of some masters and mistresses on the plantations in the district where he lived who did treat their slaves pretty much as grandma had said.

Arthur, having sufficiently satisfied his curiosity in the kitchen, went out of the back door into the yard in quest of other objects of amusement on the premises.

As the family were sitting in the parlor after dinner, engaged in social chat on various matters, the hall door was opened, and Mr. Eldridge, the pastor elect, was announced. After being received by the squire and his lady with great cordiality and introduced to their children from the south, they all sat together interchanging remarks on different subjects for a considerable time. It was evident to the spectator that both Charles and his wife were very warmly interested in the appearance and conversation of Mr. Eldridge, which they unmistakably evinced in the earnestness with which they seconded the invitation of the squire, that he would prolong his visit, when he arose to leave, and favor them with further pleasure from his society by stopping to tea. But the morrow being ordination day, all saw the propriety of his reasons for being in undisturbed meditation during the evening; and he withdrew. The door had scarcely closed after him as he passed into the hall before Charles exclaimed, —

"What a wonderful young man that Mr. Eldridge is! How easy and graceful his manners! how at home he is on almost every subject! and withal how he makes prominent, and without any ostentation too, the minister! I declare, I wish we had him at the south."

"Well," the squire remarked, "he makes the same impression almost every where."

"What an eye he has! what a pleasant voice! I dare say he is an orator," continued Charles.

So much enraptured was Charles with Mr. Eldridge that it was difficult for him, during the entire evening, to avoid introducing his name and manifesting his pleasing impressions in regard to him. He was almost impatient for the ensuing morning, that he might have an opportunity of seeing him in circumstances which would, if any circumstances could, draw out the whole man.

The morrow came, and it was one of June's most lovely days. Nature around seemed to smile auspiciously on the scenes in prospect; and gratefully were the hearts in the household of Squire Davidson impressed towards the gracious Author of the seasons for furnishing such a day for such a purpose. All were in readiness for breakfast at an earlier hour than usual, to be prepared for the council which was to assemble in the noble mansion at half past eight o'clock.

As many individuals in the parish had friends abroad who were strong in their attachments to their respective pastors, and, by reason of this strong attachment, had been brought thither for relaxation and health, and had made deep impressions on the people in the parish, it was therefore natural that such should be invited on the council; and for this reason was this body unusually large, as common usage required the extension of an invitation to the adjacent churches. The council, at the appointed hour, was organized, and the great business of its assembly at the mansion at once commenced; viz., the examination of the candidate. The moderator proposed leading questions on the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, which were promptly and most intelligently answered. There was such fulness of reply and such nicety of discrimination, that, when the examination became general and each member of the council had the privilege to interrogate, all were eager to propose questions, not so much for satisfying themselves of the fitness of the candidate for the great

work before him as to refresh their own minds with many a train of pleasing reflection on different truths of revelation, which his replies gave them the fullest opportunity for doing. When the examination touched on the religious character of the young man, his personal experience of the power of those great truths he designed to preach, his views in entering on the onerous work of the ministry, it came out to the satisfaction of every mind that he had felt the plague of sin in his own bosom, and that, for the love he bore the great Deliverer of the sinner, he wished most ardently to be instrumental in glorifying him, in beseeching his fellow-men, in his stead, to be reconciled to God. It appeared that no earthly rewards had influenced him in the choice of his profession, and that his only motive seemed to be, to aid in the salvation of his fellow-sinners. He seemed to be happy in his prospects of usefulness in the field where he had been called to labor, and, by more than one remark, left the impression on those who heard him that he *expected to live and die among the people of his first love.*

The examination closed with the warm and unanimous decision of the council to go forward and set him apart as the minister of the church and pastor of the people.

Whilst the council was engaged in the preliminary work of the day, little Arthur was busy at one of the windows watching the carriages which passed his grandfather's house in thick succession towards the church where the public services were to take place. So great was their number that he declared he never saw so many horses before in all his life; and he wondered where the people came from who were being conveyed by them.

When the council had adjourned to the church, to engage in ordination services, Arthur was wide awake in his movements over the house, and was particularly attentive to the kitchen; for here he saw very much more

of "merry Christmas" than on the preceding day. As the council was to dine at his grandfather's, the note of preparation was neither low nor slow; and it was a matter of no small wonderment to him what was to become of all the puddings he saw, as well as of the chickens, turkeys, &c. He thought ordination day was far before his Christmas; and frequently wished he could live here in New England, that he might enjoy many such days.

A little after two o'clock the noise of carriages began again to be heard; for the great event had passed, and the people were dispersing for dinner. Little Arthur was there at the windows and doors, highly excited at the velocity with which carriage after carriage was drawn along the road. Whilst he was thus engaged he turned to aunt Sarah, who was sitting by, and inquired if all the people who passed along lived in town.

"O, no," she replied; "not a quarter of them."

"Will they all go home to dinner?"

"I presume not," aunt Sarah said.

"Where will they get their dinner, then, aunt Sarah?"

"O, they will get it at their friends', who live in the parish. Every house will have more or less of them; for all the people are expecting company to-day."

"Well, they'll have a good time of it, won't they, aunt Sarah?"

At this juncture those who were to dine at Squire Davidson's began to enter the house; and soon three large rooms, with extended tables spread therein, had a numerous company of guests busily at work on what little Arthur had seen in the kitchen in the morning. Whilst thus attending to their bodily wants there was no lack of intellectual activity; for remark was frequently heard from different parts of the tables upon the various performances at the church which the people had so lately left. The company seemed to be of one mind as to the high order

of talent which these varied services brought forth, as well as to their peculiar appropriateness and solemnity. So much impressed were they with their rich excellence, that, for upwards of an hour after the tables had well ministered to their necessities of body, they continued their conversation upon what they had heard and upon subjects in illustration of the different truths which had been presented.

Then, sitting and standing a while in conversation on other topics, the company began one after another to leave; and, before the sun went down, all but three clergymen had left, and the family of the squire was restored almost to its usual quietude.

In the evening, the scenes of the day furnished the themes of conversation in the family of the squire. Whilst all were highly interested in the different parts of the public services of the ordination, — the prayers, the sermon, charge, right hand of fellowship, — it was evident that what made the deepest impression was the manner in which their new pastor acquitted himself at his examination in the morning. From this it was argued that his usefulness would not be small nor his reputation narrowly bounded, and that all the parish might well rejoice that such an ascension gift had thus been conferred as existed in the Rev. Mr. Eldridge.

On the Sabbath following the ordination, the pastor was very happy in the choice of subjects most appropriate to the new relations which had been recently consummated. It was most affecting to hear him speak of the responsibility which attached to his duty of preaching and to the duty of his people of hearing the word. It was evident that he had large expectations of usefulness in his present charge, and that it was his long and settled determination to employ his various researches and attainments for the temporal and eternal good of those who might be commit-

ted to his spiritual care. It was evident, too, that the new pastor contemplated his present field of labor as his *only charge*, and that he relied for permanency and success on the power of God, as such aid might be vouchsafed in answer to his own and his people's earnest and persevering supplication at the throne of grace. The pastor was trustful to the promises of his Savior and to the pledges of the people who had called him to labor in the midst of them; and, by reason of such trust, he remarked, in his morning discourse, he should lay broad his plans for extensive and permanent usefulness among them. "I have not sought wealth as my portion, nor honor, nor ease; but the glory of Christ in the salvation of souls. For nearly ten years have I been preparing for the great and responsible work on which I have now entered, and nearly two thousand dollars have I expended whilst making this preparation. And now have I been sent hither to make proof of my ministry to you; and here by the grace of God will I labor, relying on the good faith of the people who have called me and on those promises of Jehovah to his faithful servants which are neither few nor small."

As might be expected, his discourse, containing many such paragraphs as the above, when speaking of the scriptural duties of the pastor and people, made a deep impression on many a heart; and it is fair to presume that from more than one bosom went forth the prayer that the large expectations of the pastor might be more than realized.

CHAPTER II

MARRIAGE AND COMMENCEMENT OF HOUSEKEEPING.

About six weeks from his ordination Mr. Eldridge made a visit at the house of Squire Davidson. After mingling a while with the members of the family, who were sitting together in the parlor, he signified to the squire a desire to confer with him in private. Upon the compliance with this request, after the two had withdrawn from the circle, a wonderment on the part of the ladies was at once expressed of the object of the interview. Various causes were conjectured. Mrs. Davidson thought there might be a difficulty somewhere in the parish at which Mr. Eldridge was disturbed; for she well remembered the frequency with which their late pastor had called and sought the advice of her husband in private in relation to the troubles which were thick about him. Aunt Sarah was not so fearful. She did not believe any such reason had prompted the young pastor to seek an interview with her brother. It was her opinion that he wished to disclose some plans whereby his general usefulness in the parish might be greatly augmented. She remarked,—

"I always thought, if Mr. Eldridge should settle with us, that he would devise some new ways for benefiting his people, and yet would be cautious how he proceeded. I rather guess he wanted to consult with brother in relation to some of his plans."

Here Ann laughed aloud, and remarked, in apology for her merriment, —

"I always have heard that the Yankees were noted for guessing. Since I have been in New England I have heard the expression similar to the one aunt Sarah has now used so often that it is difficult for me to restrain a smile whenever it is repeated."

"Don't people guess any at the south?" aunt Sarah inquired.

"I presume they do," was the reply; "but they do not use the word *guess* as you use it here. I do not know that I ever heard a southerner say, 'I guess so and so.'"

"No, aunty," Charles observed; "*we southerners* don't guess any."

"That's pretty well for you, husband," remarked Ann. "I wonder what Mr. Carlton would say if he were here."

"What would he say?" Charles asked.

"You know, my dear, how much he enjoys himself over your Yankee expressions, and especially when he hears you say, 'I guess.'"

"Then they use the term reproachfully at the south?" aunt Sarah remarked.

"Not exactly so, aunt," Ann replied; "but we always know a Yankee before we have been in his society five minutes, because the expression, 'I guess,' is sure to be made within that period."

"Well," said Charles, "I would really like to know what the minister wants of father. I wish he would come in and favor us with his society."

Though many speculations were afloat in the circle in relation to the interview of the pastor with the squire, yet all failed to satisfy. There was therefore a general impatience for its termination, that relief to their anxiety might be afforded by the lips of the squire himself. This time did not quickly come; nor till long after the usual

hour for tea was suspense removed by the presence of the squire in the room from which he had been absent for upwards of three hours.

"What has closeted you all this afternoon with Mr. Eldridge?" was the quick inquiry of Mrs. Davidson of her husband.

"*Important business*," was the reply gravely returned.

So sober was the utterance and manner of the squire that Mrs. Davidson was certain of being the correct interpreter of the reason of the interview, and she almost tearfully asked what were the difficulties which were perplexing and trying the young pastor.

"His trouble is pretty great and serious, and ——"

"O, what is it? What is it? What is his trouble?" asked four or five voices at once, thus preventing the squire from completing the sentence.

"Mr. Eldridge wishes to be married and to go to housekeeping, but he cannot find a house," the squire remarked.

On this reply, sighs, which before were heavy and numerous, suddenly were exchanged for peals of laughter which almost shook the room.

"You are too cruel, Mr. Davidson," said his wife, when she was recovered from her laughing sufficiently to speak; "you are too cruel," she said, still smiling in tears. "How could you act so when you saw how we all felt?"

"You asked me, my dear, for the trouble which was perplexing Mr. Eldridge; and before I had time to give an intelligent reply, which I was proceeding to do, you all became so excited and were so loud in your inquiries that I was somewhat embarrassed. Did I not explain as soon as I had opportunity?"

"But then you looked so sober, father," said Ann, "that we could not feel otherwise than excited."

"Well," said the squire, "is not Mr. Eldridge in trouble? I think he is. I am sorry that you have so poor an opin-

ion of our people as to think that there were any parish troubles for him thus early in his connection with us."

"You know, husband," Mrs. Davidson remarked, "how often our late pastor used to come to see you about the difficulties with him; and it was natural for me to fear that some such reason might have prompted the desire of Mr. Eldridge to see you in private; and I said to the children that I was apprehensive Mr. Eldridge had heard something said to his disadvantage, and was somewhat disturbed, and wished for your counsel."

"Well," said the squire, "my dear, you see the trouble is not very formidable."

"O, yes," Mrs. Davidson replied: "yes, yes. I think such a trouble can easily be removed. He can have our Allen house."

"How so?" the squire asked. "Mr. Tucker has a lease of it for two years, you know; and it is not six months since he moved into it. Well, that is the only house near the church which will accommodate Mr. Eldridge; and that is the house he wants. He told me Deacon Smith suggested that I might arrange it with Mr. Tucker so that he would vacate it and move to the new house of ours on the Gray lot. I finally told Mr. Eldridge I would see what could be done for him."

"How soon does he wish for a house?" Ann inquired.

"Within two months," the squire replied.

"I suppose, father, you now know who the lady is to whom Mr. Eldridge is to be married," Frances said, the squire's youngest daughter, alluded to in the previous chapter.

"Yes, my daughter; it is no longer a secret. He told me her name and all about her, and gave me permission to use my knowledge at my discretion. She is the daughter of a farmer in the State of New York by the name of Whiting. She is twenty-two years old, and, Mr. Eldridge

says, is well educated, of good sense, intelligent, and a very devoted and active Christian."

"I presume she is a suitable companion for him," Mrs. Davidson remarked, "or he would not have selected her."

"I hope she will be a suitable wife for the minister of our parish," aunt Sarah said. "Our people are rather particular, you know, about the wife of their minister."

"We shall soon see her, I hope," the squire observed. "I shall go in the morning and see Mr. Tucker, to ascertain if he will move."

"I presume he will," Frances remarked. "He is a very accommodating and reasonable man, and thinks every thing of his pastor."

The next morning the squire called upon Mr. Tucker and made known to him the situation of Mr. Eldridge, and directly asked him if he would be the means of early introducing Mrs. Eldridge to the parish. After a few moments' deliberation he expressed his readiness to move if his wife would consent; but suggested that he thought she might not be disposed, as she was now well satisfied with her house. The matter being laid before her by Mr. Tucker and the squire, she at once manifested an unwillingness to leave her present abode. However, after further consultation and by a liberal offer the squire made Mr. Tucker if he would accommodate Mr. Eldridge with the house, his wife finally yielded, and the Allen house would shortly be vacated. The squire returned home and despatched a note to his pastor, acquainting him with his success and that he could occupy the wished-for house at his own convenience and pleasure.

In about six weeks from this period there might have been seen new furniture carried into the Allen house, and various other indications of an approaching important event in the history of the new pastor. The Sabbath following these indications Mr. Eldridge was not in his

pulpit, and his place was supplied by a stranger. Rumor from a hundred tongues had it *that the pastor had gone to be married.* However false and deceitful in relation to ministerial matters this dame often is, yet in the present instance of her cry her report was soon confirmed; for on the next Sabbath the parish pew — which had never known other occupants than such as were attached to the pastor's household — was in the occupancy of two ladies and a gentleman, who, before the services in the afternoon had commenced, were generally known as being the pastor's wife and her brother and sister. It was amusing to notice the glance of the eyes as they were directed from almost every part of the house to the slip where these strangers were seated. Even the little boys and girls from the galleries might be seen every now and then rising up and bending their heads and backs down below to catch a glimpse of the object of general curiosity. Nor was all attention confined to the pew. There seemed to be an unwonted attraction in the pulpit; and the pastor had, if not more attention than formerly, yet attention from motives which had not before influenced the hearers. This attention abated not from the commencement to the close of his services; for there were many there watching for blushes, if not for allusions to the new scenes on which he had lately entered. He, however, evinced both his sense and his thoughts of something beyond what was passing in the minds of many of his auditors. After the manner of many of his brethren in similar circumstances, Mr. Eldridge did not take for his text, "I am the rose of Sharon, and —— is the lily of the valley;" nor, "He setteth the solitary in families;" nor, "I have married a wife." Nor was his subject the government of a household, which some clergymen have been known to discuss on the first Sabbath of their appearance in the house of God with a wife. Mr. Eldridge wisely avoided all such themes, and so went

through with the various services of the day, that a stranger present left the house unimpressed that any thing had happened to the pastor of late more than a new unction from the holy One.

Upon the conclusion of the services and when the congregation were in motion, there were more than the usual groups along the aisles, in the entry, on the steps, and in the yard of the church. It was, therefore, unavoidable not to overhear some of the conversation which was so eagerly escaping; and much that was heard pertained to the marriage of the minister and the appearance of the wife. "Did you see her?" might often be heard. Likewise, "How do you like her looks?" "I guess she'll answer," &c.

In the evening at Squire Davidson's, the Connecticut custom in that family prevailing of "*keeping Saturday night*," the conversation turned on the pastor and wife and such remarks of the people concerning them as had that day been heard. The squire's pew, being at the right of the pulpit, afforded a fine view of the one occupied by the family of the clergyman, so that the eye would involuntarily fall upon the latter from the former. The Davidsons, therefore, could notice, without any particular effort, the countenance, dress, deportment, &c., of the pastor's wife.

Ann, in answer to the question addressed to her by her husband, "What did you think of the appearance of Mrs. Eldridge?" remarked,—

"I was somewhat disappointed; she did not appear as I expected."

"What was the matter?" Charles asked. "Was she not as handsome as you had supposed? or was she not dressed so elegantly?"

"There was nothing very elegant about her dress,"

Frances remarked. "I wonder if she was married in that dress. I presume, however, she was not."

"What kind of a dress had she on?" aunt Sarah inquired.

"It was a light-colored, figured silk, aunt, very plainly made, and did not appear like a wedding garment," Frances replied.

"I rather think it was her wedding dress," Mrs. Davidson observed: "and it was no ordinary one either, if I am any judge. It is true, it was not trimmed in the very height of fashion: but I dare say it cost much more than many a dress which you, Frances, would decide to be far more expensive. It was a very suitable dress, and I admired it very much indeed."

"What did you think of her bonnet, Frances?" Charles asked.

"O," Frances said, "I thought *that* was very beautiful."

"What did you think of her face, daughter?" asked the squire.

"She has no beauty to spare," Frances replied.

"Was there no beauty in her eye, my daughter?" the squire continued.

"I thought she had a rather pleasant eye, father."

"Yes, I thought so too," the squire observed; "and I thought that she appeared remarkably well. I have no doubt that she is a lady of very good sense and worthy of the position in which she is now placed."

"Yes," added Mrs. Davidson; "that is my opinion. I was very much pleased with all that I saw. Every thing about her indicated worth, and made me anxious to become acquainted with her."

"They will have a levee soon, will they not, father," Charles inquired, "to afford the people an opportunity to be introduced to their minister's wife?"

"There will be something of the kind, I presume, from a remark made to me by Mr. Eldridge yesterday," the squire said. "He remarked, he thought it might be well for the people to become acquainted with his wife at once, and he had concluded to give a general invitation to all to visit them next week, Tuesday."

The Tuesday came, and the invitation to the parsonage was very generally accepted by the people of the parish. The entire house was thrown open, and the good ladies had the privilege of going whither they pleased to notice all the furniture and conveniences of the premises. Mrs. Eldridge was introduced to all, and acquitted herself to the entire satisfaction of that portion of the parish represented by such individuals as Squire Davidson and wife. There were those present, however, who took exceptions to her character and appearance. Some affected to think she was not equal to her position because she did not disclose all that she knew at once. The reserve, ever the mark of merit and the ornament of character when it appears in a stranger placed in circumstances like those which then surrounded the young wife of the pastor, was interpreted as the result of inability to converse. Some thought Mrs. Eldridge was not sufficiently respectful to her company because her dress was not all puffs, laces, and embroidery. Some thought she was too *old womanish* because her attentions were so many to the aged who were around her. Some thought she was small and contracted, because, in providing for the comfort and pleasure of her guests, her own hands sometimes aided and not those of a servant always. The good young wife little thought of the variety of remark of which she was the subject in the little circles which were forming in different rooms by the people who were passing to and fro about the house; and, had she been all the while conscious of the scrutiny which was constantly upon her, her movements

could not have been more judicious nor her speech more becoming in the view of such as were competent to pass an opinion in any way entitled to regard.

The company continued till a suitable hour in the evening, when the pastor made some fitting remarks, closing them with prayer. Then the more advanced in years began to retire, and the remainder followed their example; and soon the house showed only the confusion of chairs and fragments of refreshments, some on tables, some on carpets and window casements, that significantly admonished Mrs. Eldridge what might be her employment on the morrow if not on the day succeeding that.

About four weeks from this gathering at the parsonage there was a small company at the house of Deacon Smith, invited out of respect to the pastor and wife. The Davidsons were there, and some others about the "centre," and the others were from families in the immediate vicinage of the deacon. In the course of the afternoon many of the company found themselves remarking upon the manner in which Mrs. Eldridge was received and upon different opinions that had been expressed respecting her. At length Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. Smith were left so near each other and so distant from others that their conversation could not well be overheard, when Mrs. Smith observed, —

"How foolish it is to make such a hue and cry because Mrs. Eldridge has no one to assist her but that little girl!"

"Ah," responded Mrs. Davidson, "I have not heard any thing of it. You know I have been away three or four weeks with my husband to Connecticut and New York, and I have heard nothing of what has been passing in the parish. What do they say?"

"There is much said," Mrs. Smith remarked. "A great many don't like it at all that Mrs. Eldridge does not have

a woman in her family to do her work. They say her sphere ought to be out of the kitchen and abroad in the parish. Whilst she is confined with domestic cares her influence over the people is lost."

"I cannot think," said Mrs. Davidson, "that there are many who feel thus: at least not many sensible people. Only think, there are but two of them in the family, and the house is so convenient that the work is most easily done. Who are they who feel as you describe?"

"There are Mrs. Gray, Mrs. Jones, Mr. Otis, and many others who have said much about it."

"Does *Mrs. Jones* allow herself to censure Mrs. Eldridge for this?" inquired Mrs. Davidson. "I am astonished at her. I am not at all surprised that the others are disposed to find fault. I don't think they are altogether prompted to their censures by any strong desire for Mrs. Eldridge's usefulness in the parish. Some other feeling is with them."

"What feeling?" asked Mrs. Smith.

"Pride has something to do in this matter," Mrs. Davidson continued, "and an unwillingness to have our pastor lay by any thing from his salary. You know how very proud Mrs. Gray is. She thinks it very derogatory in a lady, and especially in a minister's wife, to do any thing that is menial."

"If she thinks so," Mrs. Smith observed, "it is strange I have never heard her talk about you in this respect; for you know *you* assist very much in the work of your family. Perhaps there is no lady in town who is more conversant with the labors of the kitchen than yourself."

"I hope there is none who is less conversant," Mrs. Davidson remarked, "who has a family as large as mine. I do not know how we should get along if we trusted entirely to servants. Mrs. Gray *may take exceptions* to my

course if she pleases, and may rail about my working in the kitchen; but I think she will speak rather low, so that I shall not hear of it. I cannot understand why Mrs. Jones, who is distinguished for good sense, should feel as she does."

"There are her daughters, you know; and they have such feeling as that which you say affects Mrs. Gray," said Mrs. Smith.

"Yes, O, yes," returned Mrs. Davidson: "that is the reason, is it not? How much Mrs. Jones is influenced by her daughters!"

"Who do you think there is unwilling that our minister should be any the richer for his salary?" Mrs. Smith inquired.

"Mr. Otis is," Mrs. Davidson replied. "He objected, you know, to giving Mr. Eldridge more than six hundred dollars. When told that such a sum would be insufficient, he said he could not think but that Mr. Eldridge might live with such a salary. He was told that he might *possibly* live, but that he ought to do more than barely make the two ends of the year meet — he ought to lay up a part of his income. To this Mr. Otis objected most earnestly, and said a minister ought not to desire to grow rich — he ought not to lay up a cent."

"That is something new to me," Mrs. Smith remarked. "Mr. Smith never mentioned this to me. How very unfeeling, such a remark! Mr. Otis must have changed his opinion of a minister's duty lately, I think. How he formerly censured Mr. Eldridge's predecessor for his *extravagance!* How many times I have heard him say that he ought to look out for a *rainy* day and lay by something for a time of need!"

"Ah, *you well know what Mr. Otis is*," Mrs. Davidson said, with a somewhat elevated tone, caused by an excess of feeling.

By this remark the attention of some of the company was arrested, particularly that of Mrs. Bates, an elderly member of the church and a most worthy mother in Israel. Changing her position that she might have her curiosity gratified by being near Mrs. Davidson and her friend, she asked, —

"What is it about Mr. Otis? Has he begun again?"

"Have you not heard," inquired Mrs. Davidson, "that some of our people are pretty severe in their remarks about our minister's wife because she don't have a hired woman?"

"O, yes," replied Mrs. Bates; "I have heard of this; but I do not consider it worthy of notice."

"I think as you do," said Mrs. Davidson.

"Now, I think," continued Mrs. Bates, "that I am as well informed in relation to this matter as some others. I called upon Mrs. Eldridge last week, and, seeing a little girl busily sewing there, I asked Mrs. Eldridge who she was. In reply, she said that Mr. Eldridge and herself had had much conversation upon the matter of expenses, and that he had seen how often ministers had become involved in great trouble by extravagant and injudicious expenses and by being negligent of pecuniary concerns, and that he had determined to strive against this source of difficulty by being prudent and careful. In this feeling Mrs. Eldridge said she most truly sympathized with her husband, and she said to him that there was one item of expense which might be avoided; and that was, a hired woman. She said she told Mr. Eldridge that if she had a little girl to assist she might be able to do the work of the family. He started many objections to this course. He asked her what she would do when she was invited out, when the sewing circle met, &c. She told him she thought some way for her accommodation, when it was

necessary for her to be abroad, could be devised. Soon Mrs. Eldridge said she had a call from Mrs. Darling, who manifested great interest in their welfare, and regretted that it was not in her power to contribute more towards Mr. Eldridge's salary. She said that perhaps she could assist her some in sewing, &c. Mrs. Eldridge then said that she thought Providence was smiling on her endeavors at retrenchment, and she at once disclosed to Mrs. Darling her plan of dispensing with the services of a hired woman and of having a little girl to assist her. In such circumstances it would be a great favor to have her come in occasionally and assist her when it was necessary for her to be abroad. Mrs. Darling assented most cheerfully to this proposition, and said, as she lived so near, she could come in any time. Mrs. Eldridge then told her that, if she thought it would be in her power thus to accommodate her, she would say to her girl that she could leave before the expiration of her month — for which time she was engaged — if she was disposed, and return to her father's, whose family she left very reluctantly to accommodate them. The next day after she had this conversation with Sally they heard of this little girl, whom they had taken to remain with them till she was eighteen years of age. I told Mrs. Eldridge," said Mrs. Bates, "that I commended very highly her prudence, and that I thought she had acted very wisely. Do you think, ladies, that I did wrong?"

"No, no, by no means," both Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. Smith at once exclaimed.

"I think," said Mrs. Smith, "that Mrs. Eldridge is a very uncommon young lady; and I intend to stand by her firmly, and, if need be, to say some things to those people who are censuring her on account of her domestic arrangements which may not be very pleasant to them."

"That is right," Mrs. Davidson remarked; "I will be with you. I think we have a rich jewel in the wife of our minister. She has good common sense; and intends to act from principle, I have no doubt. If people find fault with her, I shall think the fault is in themselves."

Here tea was announced, and the conversation was interrupted.

CHAPTER III.

HARMONIOUS STATE OF THE PARISH AND PECULIAR INTEREST IN THE PASTOR.

Although, from the description of the manner in which Mrs. Eldridge was regarded by some of the parish as given in the preceding chapter, an inference might be made unfavorable to the popularity of the pastor, yet the inference would not be correct. The individuals who were heard to animadvert with severity upon the wife were loud in their praises of the husband. Their feeling of disapprobation of the former was rather superficial than deep; for, in the course pursued by individuals like Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Davidson, it was not many months before it all died away, and not a whisper was heard to the disadvantage of Mrs. Eldridge. From many expressions, moreover, from the sources whence formerly proceeded censure, it became evident that mortification for imprudent speech and hasty judgment had, at least for a season, closed the aperture of trouble which on the part of some was feared would eventually prove great. Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Gray, and others, though, as ever, mingling much with the people, were not known to express themselves as formerly to the discredit of Mrs. Eldridge, but, on the contrary, were heard to speak of her with praise and highly to commend her as a lady of great prudence in her domestic arrangements, and well adapted to the

important sphere in which she was called to act. That unanimity in relation to all ministerial concerns was great was acknowledged in all parts of the parish; and it was proverbial in adjacent towns that the people to whom Mr. Eldridge ministered had at length found a clergyman of whom they were all exceedingly proud.

"Father," asked Frances Davidson, about ten months after the settlement of Mr. Eldridge, "why do not our people *now* build a vestry? You know they tried two or three years since, but failed because our former pastor was so unpopular. I should think there might be one built now, as everybody likes Mr. Eldridge so well."

"What should put such an idea into your head, child?" the squire asked. "Have you heard any one speak about building a vestry?"

"No, father; I have not heard a word about it for a long time. The thought came to me just as I was making some preparation for the meeting this evening at the town house."

"When you asked the question, daughter, I did not know but that you overheard our conversation as you came into the room when Mr. Sheldon and Deacon Smith were in."

"Were you talking about *building a vestry*, father, this afternoon?" asked Frances, highly delighted with the prospect.

"Yes, daughter; and the parish committee have this afternoon inserted an article in the warrant for the annual parish meeting, which will be held in about two weeks, to see if the people will build a vestry this summer."

"I think they will do it, father; do you not?"

"I rather think they will, daughter. We very much need such an accommodation."

* * * * *

"Husband, when are you going to see your old friend Mr. Billings?" asked Mrs. Davidson of the squire one Monday morning. "It is so pleasant to-day; and, as I do not feel very well, I have thought I would propose a ride over there this afternoon."

"My dear," the squire replied, "it is our annual parish meeting this afternoon; and I cannot be away from *that*, you know."

"O, I forgot that. No; you will of course wish to be present. It is singular I should have forgotten it when we have talked so much of the feeling which building a vestry would excite. Well," continued Mrs. Davidson, "I think I will send John with a note to Mrs. Smith, and invite her to ride up here this afternoon with the deacon when he comes to the parish meeting."

"I would do so, my dear. I should very much like to have the deacon come in here after meeting and talk over matters."

A note was accordingly sent. The invitation was cordially accepted; and Mrs. Smith came early in the afternoon. As Frances had gone out to be absent a short time, there were only Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Davidson, and aunt Sarah together. These friends being very sociable, and were so much engrossed with conversation on subjects which exceedingly interested them, that Mrs. Davidson was unconscious of the flight of time, and was hence surprised at the appearance of one of her domestics on an errand that denoted the hour for tea to be near.

"Is it possible," she asked, "that it is five o'clock?" instantly turning her eye to the clock inclosed on the shelf. "Dear me! I had no idea it was so late. Well, as it is parish meeting to-day, Mr. Davidson will not be in for tea at the usual hour; and it will be no matter if we are a little tardy."

Excusing herself, Mrs. Davidson followed Margaret to

the kitchen, where remaining a few minutes, she returned to the parlor and found Frances in most animated conversation with Mrs. Smith and her aunt.

"What news now, my daughter?" inquired Mrs. Davidson.

"O mother, what a large parish meeting they are having! It seemed like Sunday as I passed the town house, there were so many carriages about. I guess they will have a vestry now."

"Perhaps not," aunt Sarah replied. "We can't tell what so many people have come out for. It may be there is warm opposition to the project."

"O, no," remarked Mrs. Smith; "if there was opposition, we should have heard of it before this. I presume the people are all in favor of building."

"O, I hope they are," Frances said. "I do desire some other place in which to hold our evening meetings than the cold, dirty town house."

The company continued variously discussing the probabilities of the exciting subject now before the parish meeting being favorably received till the arrival of Squire Davidson and the deacon. As soon as the gentlemen were seated, Mrs. Smith, addressing her husband, inquired how the matter of the vestry was disposed of."

"We have decided to build," was the reply.

"I am truly rejoiced at this decision," Mrs. Smith observed.

"That is good news," Mrs. Davidson said.

"Yes," said the squire; "it will be a fine thing for the parish; and I feel very grateful that we have so fair a prospect for a vestry. We have had a very harmonious and pleasant meeting."

"Was there more harmony this afternoon than there was at the meeting at which the people gave a call to Mr. Eldridge to settle?" aunt Sarah asked.

"There could not be *more* harmony; for the people were unanimous in their call," the squire replied. "There were many more out this afternoon than at that meeting, however."

"I thought there was a very large attendance this afternoon, father," said Frances, "as I passed the town house."

"Yes, daughter; it was the largest parish meeting that I ever attended. Did you not think it the largest we ever had, deacon?"

"Certainly; by far," the deacon replied. "I was not expecting to see half the number out. It really does me good to see so much interest in our pastor as was manifested this afternoon."

"Was it not wonderful, deacon, that there was no more opposition exhibited?" the squire asked. "I always supposed that we should carry the vote to build by a handsome majority; but I had no idea that it would be unanimous."

"Was it a unanimous vote?" aunt Sarah asked.

"We must call it so, I think; must we not, deacon?"

"I think so," the deacon replied. "When the contrary minds were called I did not see any hands raised."

"I did not," the squire observed. "I thought that Mr. Otis, Mr. Brown, and Colonel Presbury would certainly vote against building."

"Yes," said the deacon; "and Captain Fletcher likewise."

"I did not think of Captain Fletcher," the squire remarked. "Did you ever know him vote with us before?"

"I never did," the deacon said. "I shall almost think that I did not vote right, seeing that he was with me."

"I do not much wonder you think so," the squire said.

Here the company were summoned to the tea table, at

which little Arthur was seated by the side of his grandfather. As was perfectly natural, Mrs. Smith, knowing that he was no unimportant character in the family, and that he was a bright, well-behaved child, directed her conversation to him.

"Well, Arthur," she said, "don't you get homesick sometimes?"

"No, ma'am," he replied, looking up to his grandfather, smiling.

"Not much homesick here with his grandpa," the squire said, as he placed his hand on the head of the little fellow. "He and grandpa have fine times."

"Does he love to attend school?" Mrs. Smith inquired of the grandmother.

"Yes, pretty well," Mrs. Davidson said. "He sometimes, however, requests to stay at home."

"Well, I suppose you are not very urgent for him to go at such times," Mrs. Smith said, with a significant smile. "Grandparents are inclined to be indulgent, you know."

Little Arthur looked up and burst forth in loud laughter.

"What now, dear?" inquired the grandmother.

"I was thinking what papa said as he stood on the doorway when he was leaving for home."

"What did he say, child? I do not remember."

The boy manifesting a little shyness in replying, but being urged to speak by both his grandparents, at length said, —

"Don't you remember that papa said, '*Don't spoil Arthur now by letting him have his own way, as grandparents are apt to do*'?"

"O, yes, dear; yes, we remember that."

"Well," said the grandmother, "does Arthur think that he is in danger of being spoiled?"

Arthur smiled and said, "I don't have to mind here as I did at home, I think."

"The little fellow," said Mrs. Davidson, "is here alone, with no young children around; and we can't always refuse his requests, you know."

"O, no, no," said Mrs. Smith; "it is *not in the nature* of grandparents to refuse."

"I *understand*," said Mrs. Davidson; "I understand. We'll see one of these days how Mrs. Smith manages with her grandchildren."

"We do not intend to treat Arthur in any very different manner from that in which we treated our own children," the squire observed.

"O, no, I presume not," Mrs. Smith said; "but somehow or other grandparents seem to forget how they formerly treated their own children. Don't you think so, squire?"

"I don't know," the squire replied, "but that they do. You must not rub us too hard. You know we like to see the little folks enjoy themselves."

"That is it," continued Mrs. Smith. "No wonder grandchildren are so fond of going to see grandpa and grandma. They have fine times together."

"I don't think Arthur's grandparents often remember what Charles said to them about being too indulgent," aunt Sarah said, with much gravity and deliberation.

"Why so, sister?" the squire asked. "Do you think we are very indulgent?"

"I remember how you *formerly* brought up children; and I think your present mode of management is very unlike that."

"Well," said the squire, "we will try not to spoil Arthur entirely," as he helped him to a second piece of cake in answer to his request.

"There," said aunt Sarah, "what you have *now* done you never would do to your own children."

"O, well, sister, perhaps I am wiser than formerly," the squire replied, with a smile.

Arthur having despatched his cake, betraying all the while the consciousness that he was in pretty indulgent hands, the company retired from the table. Mrs. Smith remaining with Mrs. Davidson, the squire and the deacon returned to the parlor and resumed conversation on the doings of the parish meeting. At the recital by the deacon of what he heard Captain Fletcher remark, both gentlemen were indulging themselves in a hearty laugh when the ladies entered.

"You seem to be very merry, gentlemen," Mrs. Smith observed. "I hope we ladies will not be any interruption."

"By no means, madam," said the squire.

"Now, husband," said Mrs. Davidson, "let us hear all about the parish meeting. You remarked before tea that the vote to build was unanimous; was there no opposition?"

"Not when the vote was taken. The question was pretty fully discussed, and there were a few who thought the expense might be avoided. Mr. Otis thought the town would be willing to have the parish repair the town house and control it. If such an arrangement could be made, he argued, it would be better to repair than to build. Colonel Presbury took a similar view, and so did Mr. Brown."

"These gentlemen did not vote to build, did they?" Mrs. Smith inquired.

"No, madam," the squire said; "nor did they vote not to build. They thought something ought to be done, but wished to avoid the great expense required in building a vestry."

"They were thinking of their taxes," the deacon said.

"I dare say this," Mrs. Davidson observed. "They are always complaining of high town and parish taxes."

"What induced Captain Fletcher to vote as he did?" Mrs. Smith inquired.

"He surprised us all," the squire replied. "He not only voted in favor of building, but he advocated the measure in a somewhat lengthy speech."

"Captain Fletcher make a speech, father!" said Frances. "What was it?"

"He began by remarking," the squire said, "that he supposed a vestry would not be of much use to him or any of his neighbors unless we all alter very much. We have not a very good character there in Hard Scrabble for going to meeting Sundays in the meeting house, or for our treatment of ministers, or for any thing relating to religion; but, said he, we know some things, after all. We can tell a good minister any time by just seeing him. Now, Mr. Moderator, they have got a first-rate minister now, in the opinion of Hard Scrabble folks at least. He has been in that neighborhood and called at every house; and he preached not long ago in the school house there, and we all turned out and filled up the building for him. We all like Mr. Eldridge; and I told my wife, when I saw the warrant up for this meeting, that I meant to go and make a speech and vote to build a vestry for Mr. Eldridge, because I like the man. Now, I have done what I said I would; and I shall vote to build a good large vestry equal to any in "the parts;" and I see many of my neighbors here who have said that they should vote to build too, because they like the minister. There is Mr. Frost, or, as we call him, the 'general:' he told me that, if I would attend this meeting and make a speech here, he would likewise. Now, I hope the old gentleman won't back out."

"Why, Mr. Davidson!" his wife remarked, in a tone of great surprise. "Captain Fletcher did not say all this, did he?"

"Certainly he did, my dear, and much more. He spoke for a good half hour, and he astonished us all."

"Were there many down from Hard Scrabble?" Frances inquired.

"Yes, daughter; there were fifteen or twenty."

"Did they all vote for a vestry?" aunt Sarah asked.

"I presume so," the squire replied. "They all looked interested and pleased."

"I hope," said Mrs. Davidson, "that General Frost, as they call him, did not make a speech as he was challenged to do by Captain Fletcher."

"Why not, my dear?"

"I should not think a drunkard like him would have influence on any one."

"He has left off drinking now, you know," Mrs. Smith remarked.

"No. I never heard of that," Mrs. Davidson said.

"It is a fact, I believe," continued Mrs. Smith. "It is now nearly a year since he has drank any."

"That is really cheering intelligence," Mrs. Davidson said; "and now I hope he did make a speech in the parish meeting."

"He did make one," the squire said, "and said many good things which it was interesting to hear. As I reported Captain Fletcher, I must ask the deacon to report the general for the gratification of the ladies."

The deacon accordingly proceeded, and said that Mr. Frost began with saying, —

"I did tell Captain Fletcher that, if he came to this meeting and made a speech, I would do the same. I did not think he would come; and, if he came, I did not think that any person in this meeting would expect to hear him speak any more than they would me; and I am sure no one would have expected a speech from me any more than from that old crazy Jenkins who was buried last week. But, Mr. Moderator, here I am; and I will try to say something about building a vestry. I think there ought to be one built. This place is not fit to hold meetings in. It is cold and dirty; and there ought to be a

better place. My daughter comes down here to evening meetings sometimes; and she complains because it is so uncomfortable and not clean. Mr. Otis pretends that the town would consent to have this building repaired: but I am opposed to the town's business being done by the parish. I go for a new vestry. I think we ought to build one because they tell me the minister wants one. Mr. Eldridge is a nice man, I believe. I, for one, like him much. He has been up our way and preached in the school house, as the captain told you; and he preached a right smart sermon; and he prayed right smart, too. I tell our folks I must come down here some Sunday and hear him further; and if you build a vestry I ain't sure but that I shall come to the evening meetings sometimes when there is a moon."

"The general acquitted himself well," Mrs. Davidson observed.

"Certainly he did," the deacon replied. "Mr. Frost is a very sensible man, and, but for his intemperate habits, would have made a very valuable citizen."

"I think he would," the squire said. "I've often thought, when he has been in the store, that I did not know of a shrewder man than he."

"I hope," aunt Sarah said, "he has reformed and will continue a sober man. Who knows but that he may be a Christian yet?"

"Were there any there from Kenyon's Corner, father?" Frances inquired.

"Yes, daughter, a large number; and they appeared much interested in having a vestry."

"Did any of them say any thing?" Mrs. Davidson asked.

"No, dear, not in meeting; but I talked with Mr. Brown and Mr. Freeman after the meeting was over, who told me they thought the people in that neighborhood were all

in favor of building. They had much to say about Mr. Eldridge, and thought that he was just the man for us."

"It seems," Mrs. Smith remarked, "that people in every part of the parish feel as they do in Kenyon's Corner towards our pastor. I saw Mrs. Duncan from Union Village last week, who informed me the people in her neighborhood were carried away with Mr. Eldridge."

"From all that was said in the meeting this afternoon," the squire remarked, "I judged the people were very much united in Mr. Eldridge, and that their esteem for him was increasing the more they saw of him."

"I was similarly impressed," the deacon said. "I think we have great cause for gratitude that such a good minister has been sent us. I do not hear any thing said against Mr. Eldridge; but almost every week I hear much in his favor."

"You are very favorably situated for knowing the minds of the people," Mrs. Davidson said; "as almost every family in town sends to your mill."

"Did they decide where to locate the vestry?" Frances asked.

"O, yes, daughter," the squire said; "they decided to set it where I told you I thought they would — on Mr. Duncan's lot, if he will sell half an acre. I rather think he will; as he is in favor of building and knows that his lot is the best location."

"What kind of a building will they erect?" aunt Sarah asked.

"A one-story building," the squire replied, "large enough to have one spacious room and two smaller ones to open into the larger one. These small rooms will be convenient for many purposes. In one of them the Sabbath school library and parish library can be accommodated. The ladies can hold their sewing circle in one of these small rooms; and, on the Sabbath, the people

who do not return home during the intermission can have a very warm and comfortable place in which to remain."

"People will be much accommodated by such an arrangement," Mrs. Smith observed.

"And Mr. Eldridge likewise," said Frances. "He has always wished for a vestry; and I am much pleased that there is now a prospect of his being gratified."

"Had Mr. Eldridge not been very popular throughout the parish we should not have had such a prospect," Mrs. Smith remarked; "do you think we should, squire?"

"We are undoubtedly indebted to his general popularity for the vote to build a vestry, I think," the squire replied.

"Most certainly," said the deacon. "We could never have obtained a vote to build had not Mr. Eldridge been very popular in the parish."

CHAPTER IV.

CROOKED STICK.

Such in every parish as are interested in the elements of its prosperity, and upon whom no small share of responsibility devolves, who look upon the parish with almost the interest with which they contemplate their own families, sensitive to every passing breeze, watching it to discover if health or disease be odorous therein, know full well that there is no parochial union that is impregnable, and that, however united a people may be in their pastor to-day, there is no security against disrupture to-morrow. The minister is peculiarly the victim of caprice, of distorted vision, of disappointed hopes, and of diseased minds and hearts. If there be deaf persons in the parish, he is sure to be reported as having said that of which he never thought and of having omitted to say what he did. If there be hypochondriacs in the parish, in some way or other he approaches them on the dark side; so that he is not seen as he is. If there be great news gatherers and news spreaders there, he must take it for granted that his presence in the company of such for ten minutes will furnish materials for the gossip of a week; and he must not wonder if some brother minister whom he meets when he next goes to the association should call him to an account for some of his speeches or conduct which are making much excitement in neighboring towns, in relation

to which he is as disconnected as the missionary to Japan, and of which no mortal ever breathed to him before. If there be vain persons in the parish, — men who are important only in their own conceit, who have wisdom which they *care* to impart and counsel for every emergency, but who, withal, are very careful of their pockets, not exactly understanding how to pay much towards the salary of the pastor, or how to assist in making up any parish arrearages, or do any thing to make all things move onward smoothly and pleasantly, — the minister need not lay it much to heart if he hears from such individuals strange stories and doleful forebodings after any important measure has been adopted, and in relation to which the deacons, squires, and other principal men had not seen fit to call upon and consult these wise men previous to the meeting at which such measure was carried. We are all familiar with the adage, "It takes all sorts of men to make a world;" and most generally it can be affirmed of parishes that they are composed of every variety of material. There are times when this versatile material seems to have a oneness about it; as there are seasons when the sea is tranquil and calm, presenting to the unpractised eye impotency to surge and wave. Clouds, however, often suddenly gather; and where but a few moments before there was a placid sheet of water, with hardly a ripple to meet the view, may now be seen the mountain wave and the yawning depth. So of parishes where the diversity of material composing it may seem to have *no* variety; in a time unlooked for discordant elements may appear, threatening destruction to all which makes pastoral and ministerial comfort and usefulness secure.

A little more than two years from the settlement of Mr. Eldridge, as little Arthur was on his way from school, he stopped, as was his frequent practice, at his grandfather's store to furnish his pockets with a little variety of confec-

tionery, to be able to gratify his own appetite as well as confer ever-welcome gifts upon favorite schoolfellows. There happened to be no one in the store at the time but his grandfather, Mr. Billings, and Deacon Smith. Little Arthur noticed that his grandfather was a little excited, and, by one of the expressions which escaped the old gentleman, he was somewhat impressed. He could not apply it as was his desire, nor decipher it as he tried hard to do; so, not waiting for his grandfather to accompany him home as usual, — for he saw no indications in him of any thought of dinner, — he went off alone to his home. As soon as he entered the room where his grandmother was arranging the table he somewhat eagerly and loudly inquired, —

"Grandma, what is crooked stick?"

"Crooked stick, child! Don't Arthur know what that is?" his grandmother said. "Why, it is a piece of wood that is not straight."

"Is Mr. Otis a stick of wood, grandma?"

"Why do you ask such a question, child?" uttered his grandmother. "Mr. Otis is a gentleman, Arthur."

"Well, then," inquired the little fellow, "what did grandpa mean when he said that Mr. Otis was a crooked stick?"

"Did you hear him call Mr. Otis a crooked stick, my child?"

"Yes, grandma, I did. I heard him say so twice just now at the store. He said, 'It don't signify; Mr. Otis is a *crooked stick* — a crooked stick.'"

"Who did he say this to, Arthur?"

"To Mr. Billings and Deacon Smith, grandma."

The grandmother, understanding more than the child, and being grieved with fearful apprehensions of trouble in the parish, diverted the further curiosity of Arthur by requesting him to go out to the hennery and bring her in

some eggs. Whilst the little boy was out the squire came in, and, not seeing Mrs. Davidson or Arthur, he asked aunt Sarah, —

"Has not Arthur come home yet?"

"O, yes," she replied; "he came home some time ago. His grandmother sent him out just now to look for some eggs. Has any thing new happened, brother?"

"Why do you ask such a question, sister?"

"O, I thought from what Arthur told his grandmother something or other was brewing in the parish."

"What did he say?"

"He came home and told his grandmother that you called Mr. Otis a crooked stick twice; and he wanted his grandmother to explain what you meant."

"Well, if he lives as long as I have and has much to do with the world, he'll find out what crooked stick means to his sorrow."

"What now, brother?" asked aunt Sarah, somewhat alarmed at the decided tones of the squire. "What has Mr. Otis been doing?"

"O, nothing very alarming, but something very provoking," the squire replied. "He wants to have Deacon Smith resign his post as chorister and be succeeded by Mr. Nelson."

Mrs. Davidson now entering the room, her husband at once remarked, —

"Sister tells me that Arthur came home with some startling news."

"Yes, husband; and pray tell me *what the man is up to now.*"

"I have just been telling sister about it. Mr. Otis wishes to have Deacon Smith retire from the seats and have Mr. Nelson lead the singing."

"Mr. Nelson!" exclaimed Mrs. Davidson. "Why, he has not been in the parish six weeks yet; and who

knows what his character is or what his excellence as a singer?"

"Who knows?" said the squire, with emotion. "Why, Mr. Otis knows; and that is sufficient."

"I thought," aunt Sarah observed, "that Mr. Otis had a very high opinion of the deacon as a singer. He was very anxious that he should take the lead."

"He was," said the squire, "three years ago; but I suppose he has become tired of the deacon's tunes and wants something new."

"Will our people consent to have the deacon give up?" Mrs. Davidson inquired.

"This matter of singing," the squire said, "is a delicate affair. The singers must do as they please, or there will be trouble, you know. Mr. Otis has been circulating a paper among them, and several have signed it, in which a preference is given to Mr. Nelson for chorister and a desire expressed that he may be appointed."

"Who has signed the paper?"

"Mr. Cushing, Mr. Everett, Mr. Humphrey, Miss Lord, Miss Simons, and others whose names I have forgotten," the squire said.

"Has Mr. Nichols, or Mr. Parker, or Miss Wilson, or Miss Carter?"

"No, not either of them, my dear; and they will not, the deacon tells me. They and many others have been to him to urge him to take no notice of what Mr. Otis is doing. Mr. Parker told the deacon that Mr. Otis was a crooked stick, always had been, and always would be, till he was straightened in his grave. It was when Mr. Billings was telling me of this that I said what Arthur mentioned."

Previous to going to the store after dinner the squire proposed to his wife to ride down to Mr. Clay's after tea and spend the evening. Mr. Clay occupied an important

position in society. Having been liberally educated, and with fair prospects of success in professional life, he was under the necessity, from regard to his health, of not prosecuting the study of law, on which he had entered, and of devoting himself to agricultural pursuits. A valuable farm being offered for sale in the town about the time he came to the conclusion to abandon study, and noticing the advertisement in the papers, he was induced, by his knowledge of the scenery about it, and of the character of many of the people of the place, many of whom he personally knew and had visited, to become its purchaser. He accordingly soon took possession of the same, having previously married a very estimable and pious young lady. He became a resident of the place about two years before the settlement of Mr. Eldridge, and had attained an extensive influence in the community when this event occurred. Both Mr. and Mrs. Clay were ardently attached to Mr. Eldridge, and in every thing relating to his happiness they were most deeply interested. Their house was the frequent resort of the pastor and of other individuals who could appreciate intellectual and moral worth.

Squire Davidson and wife had not long been seated in the parlor of these friends before Mrs. Clay inquired of Mrs. Davidson if Mr. Parker had called upon them in relation to a subscription to procure for Deacon Smith a valuable family Bible in token of the esteem in which he was held for his services as chorister.

"Do you hear that, husband?" said Mrs. Davidson to the squire, who was engrossed in conversation with Mr. Clay.

"No, my dear; what?"

Mrs. Davidson then repeated the remark of Mrs. Clay.

"No, Mrs. Clay," said the squire, "we have heard nothing of the kind. It is a very timely manifestation of regard for a most worthy man, and I hope it may do good."

"Did Mr. Parker say any thing in relation to a desire on the part of some for a new leader of our singing?" Mrs. Davidson inquired.

"He did not," Mrs. Clay replied. "He appeared to be in haste and did not stop long. Are not all satisfied with the deacon?"

"We never knew of any dissatisfaction with him till to-day," Mrs. Davidson replied.

"Who is opposed to him?" Mr. Clay asked.

"I believe Mr. Otis is at the bottom of the opposition," the squire said. "The deacon was in at my store this morning somewhat troubled about it. I never heard of it till he mentioned the subject to me. He says that Mr. Otis has been to him and pretty broadly hinted that it would be pleasant to a number of the singers and many of the people if they could have Mr. Nelson for chorister."

"Mr. Parker didn't like this arrangement, I rather think," Mr. Clay remarked.

"He does not," said the squire. "He is very much disturbed about it, and means to prevent it if possible. I am very glad to hear, as you have informed us, that he is now engaged in obtaining means for showing the deacon how highly he is regarded by us for his services as chorister. It is a capital plan."

"What kind of a man is this Mr. Otis?" Mr. Clay inquired. "I never had much acquaintance with him."

"O, I do not know," the squire said. "He has some good traits of character; but, somehow or other, he has many enemies."

"I thought this might be the case by what I have heard," Mr. Clay said. "Mr. Billings was in here the other day highly excited by some of his conduct in relation to the school house they are building in his district; and, from what he said of the man, I could not help thinking of what my father used to say of some people."

"What was that?" the squire asked.

"Why," said Mr. Clay, "there was a man in our neighborhood who greatly annoyed every one about him by his course in regard to any thing relating to town matters, or school matters, or parish matters. He was never satisfied. How many times I have heard father say he was a crooked stick!"

This remark very much excited both the squire and his wife, who at once manifested their emotion by a most hearty laugh, in explanation of which the squire observed, —

"That is just the remark some people about here make respecting Mr. Otis. Mr. Billings was telling me to-day that Mr. Parker had said that Mr. Otis was a crooked stick, always had been, and always would be till he was straightened in his grave. It is a fact, Mr. Clay: that individual is a very troublesome character. There is no dependence upon him. If he is satisfied with a thing to-day, he may not be to-morrow."

"These crooked sticks are very inconvenient," Mr. Clay said. "I suppose Mr. Otis is not the only one we have among us."

"I am sorry to say," said Mrs. Davidson, "that there are others."

"There is such a piece in this neighborhood," said Squire Davidson.

"Who do you refer to — Mr. Andrews?"

"Yes, sir."

"There is another near you," said Mrs. Clay.

"Mr. Scott, I suppose you refer to," said the squire. "Yes; he is one of this species of timber. If it were not for these men and a few others, and three or four women in town, — asking your pardon, ladies, — I should have but little fear of any parochial trouble; but now I am in constant apprehension that every month may

start something against Mr. Eldridge that will give us trouble."

"I admire your independence, squire," said Mrs. Clay, "in the declaration of the truth, though it brings us ladies under condemnation. I really think there are crooked sticks among us as well as among the gentlemen, and of equal, if not greater, harm sometimes."

"Your good sense, madam, is to be applauded," the squire replied, bowing very pleasantly, "in being willing to admit the *truth*."

"What a dreadful thing it would be," Mrs. Clay observed, "if any of our crooked sticks should be the means of the dismission of Mr. Eldridge!"

"I know it," Mrs. Davidson replied. "We often speak of it at home."

"I think it ought not to be so," Mr. Clay observed, "that one or two individuals can break up the peace of a parish and be the means of the dismission of a pastor."

"I know that," the squire said; "but it is so very often. I know people ought to rise at once and put these individuals down who are ever ready to make or increase difficulties in a parish; but, for some reason or other, there is often an indisposition on the part of the people to take a firm stand in favor of right and against wrong. Were there firmness on the part of the friends of law and order, and should they manifest their determination to abide by the right and put down the wrong, there would be more security for pastors and more stability for churches. I suppose the great reason for the apathy of the great body of the people, when a few malcontents have created troubles in the parish with the minister, is their unwillingness to be drawn into contention. They do not want to burn their fingers by meddling with the fire, I suppose."

"Such conduct, I think, is decidedly wrong," Mr. Clay remarked. "It involves a species of cruelty which I call

intolerable. When these crooked sticks make a fire — which might with perfect ease be suppressed at once if the many would rally to the effort, and thus the peace, comfort, and usefulness of a minister be promoted and continued — the pastor is sacrificed, his family distressed and famished, by reason of the backwardness of the people to interpose and show such crooked sticks their proper places and that they cannot accomplish their disorganizing and destructive ends. How such people who are satisfied with their pastor can calmly look on when these destroyers of his prospects, happiness, and usefulness are at work, and not manifest their indignation and their determination to rescue him from their power and preserve him unspoiled, is more than I can reconcile with the exercise of a good conscience. When the fire might be extinguished with a very small effort, rather than subject themselves to the least exposure, people suffer it to burn and do its worst!"

"That *is cruel* indeed!" Mrs. Davidson exclaimed. "A good minister, one that most of the people love and respect, who *has been* and *may long be* useful, allowed, with wife and children, to be burned up in a fire kindled by a few uneasy, restless spirits, when with a very little effort it might be put out, and the pastor, his family, and his parish be saved from distress or ruin, — what is such conduct but extreme cruelty?"

"Well," said Mrs. Clay, "if any of our crooked sticks attempt to make any such fire for our dear pastor, I hope there are enough of us who will be ready to sound the alarm and labor to extinguish it."

"I fear you would be disappointed," the squire observed. "Though all are ready, as they think, to pluck out their eyes for Mr. Eldridge, yet, if the time should ever come when our crooked sticks have made a difficulty with him, I fear there would be an unwillingness on the part

of the great body of the people to interpose. Those who made the trouble would be suffered to work on without resistance from an unwillingness of the people to be drawn into a conflict. People love ease and quietude, and are amazing slow to do or say any thing to jeopardize either. The difficulties with Mr. Eldridge might be exceedingly regretted and the conduct of the individuals making them might be severely censured, and at the same time there be no disposition to resist and remove them for the purpose of retaining our pastor. People would say, — or, if they did not say this, they would act as though they did, — 'It is really shameful that there is this trouble with Mr. Eldridge when there is no good reason for it. He has been very useful here; and, but for this opposition from a few restless individuals, he might continue to be useful; but, then, those who are opposed to him will not be easy till he is dismissed; and we don't know but that, *all things considered, it will be better to let him go than to contend.* He is such a good man and such a smart preacher that he would not be troubled any to get another parish, and perhaps a much better one than this.'"

"If our people *ever do* act in this manner," said Mrs. Clay, with great decision, "I hope they will be made to smart for it."

"You and I will keep a sharp lookout for our crooked sticks, won't we, Mrs. Clay?" said Mrs. Davidson.

"That is the only way for a people to do," the squire remarked. "If our parishes would realize the danger they are in of being disturbed by a few uneasy and unprincipled persons, and would be resolute in putting down the slightest attempts at disorganization, we should not hear of so many dismissions of ministers. There would be more stability in our churches and a greater permanency to the pastoral relation."

CHAPTER V.*

THE PASTOR A MAN OF PRAYER.

The attention of several gentlemen having been attracted to some landed property belonging to the parish of Mr. Eldridge, who expressed a desire to purchase the same, and for which a liberal sum was offered, a parish meeting was called for the consideration of the subject. After suitable discussion it was voted to commit the sale of the land to a committee of which Squire Davidson, Deacons Smith and Barnes, and Mr. Clay were a part. This committee having had three sessions, so far completed the negotiation as to be able with a little further attention to announce to the individuals desiring to purchase their readiness to consummate a sale. They accordingly adjourned their third meeting to the evening on which the next weekly prayer meeting would be held, when, on the conclusion of the services, they would finish what remained to be done for the completeness of their work.

At the termination of the next prayer meeting, Mrs.

* In this and a few subsequent chapters will be presented the elements of Mr. Eldridge's character as they were developed in the course of three years from the commencement of his ministry and which in all parts of the parish were accorded to him. It may be well here to state that, in the subsequent years of his ministry to the same people, instead of waning in the least, this character shone with a brighter lustre, as was from time to time conceded and with pride acknowledged by his parishioners. The remembrance of this circumstance by the reader will aid much in understanding the sequel.

Davidson, with her characteristic politeness, invited such ladies as were in the care of the committee to accompany her home and there remain whilst the committee were in session. Accordingly Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Clay accepted the invitation and directly proceeded to the house of Mrs. Davidson, which was situated at but a little distance from the vestry. Upon entering the room they were warmly greeted by aunt Sarah and Miss Frances, and after a little time the whole company were engaged in most interesting conversation. Aunt Sarah, ever interested in things pertaining to godliness, did not long forbear to inquire after the services of the devotional season in which those who had just entered the room had been participating. In reply to her question, Mrs. Clay remarked,—

"O, yes, Miss Davidson: we have had a most precious meeting this evening, I assure you. I wish it had been in your power to be there. You are not aware what a great loser you are in being unable to unite with us in these weekly seasons of prayer. They are so heavenly and sweet as makes me always regret when they close."

"It would be a great privilege, I know," said aunt Sarah, "to attend these meetings, and I feel it to be a most severe trial in being deprived of it. I rejoice, however, that others are blessed with it and that there is so much spirituality on the part of our church, which makes these prayer meetings so precious."

"There might be *much more* spirituality in the members of the church who attend these meetings," Mrs. Clay remarked. "I wonder that there is not more, when we have such a godly and praying pastor. It is to Mr. Eldridge that our prayer meetings owe their interest. Were it not for him, I fear these seasons would not be so profitable as they now are. It always seems to me that his whole soul is absorbed with God and Christ and desires to have all the people under the power of religion. I never heard

a minister pray as he does or seize hold of circumstances and events to interest and excite the people to prayer."

"I have always thought," said aunt Sarah, "that our pastor was a very devout man, from his conversation and prayers here when he calls. I am always exceedingly pleased when he comes in, for I know I am to have a rich spiritual feast."

"Did you ever know our prayer meetings so fully attended, Mrs. Davidson, as they have been almost from the very first of Mr. Eldridge's being with us?" Mrs. Clay inquired.

"I am not aware," Mrs. Davidson replied, "that there ever was before so large an attendance when there was no special religious interest."

"In a revival season I think I never saw more out," Mrs. Smith remarked, "than are now, or than there have been for most of the time since Mr. Eldridge has been with us. People come from all parts of the town — from Union Village, and even from Hard Scrabble."

"You know," said Mrs. Clay, "that it is a very common remark among our people that our minister is great at prayer and makes the prayer meetings very interesting. People in our neighborhood, when they call in to see us, often speak of Mr. Eldridge's prayers and of their deep interest in being present at his prayer meetings. Old Mr. Osgood was in last week, and he had much to say of Mr. Eldridge in this respect."

"He was jesting, I suppose," said Frances.

"I thought he was at first," Mrs. Clay replied, "and answered him accordingly; but he really seemed hurt that I did not consider him sincere in his expressions of interest in Mr. Eldridge."

"I am really glad to hear of this," aunt Sarah said. "Mr. Osgood may be a converted man yet."

"I have noticed, of late," said Mrs. Davidson, "that he

has been at meeting on the Sabbath, and thought that the circumstance denoted interest in Mr. Eldridge."

"O, he is much interested in him," Mrs. Clay said. "There can be no mistake about this. He has had much to say of a visit Mr. Eldridge made lately at his house, and he thinks him the best minister he ever knew."

"If I mistake not," said Mrs. Smith, "I have seen him out lately at some of our prayer meetings."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Clay. "He has been there several times: and he tells me he intends to go as often as he can, he is so much pleased with Mr. Eldridge's prayers and exhortations."

"I think this intelligence of Mr. Osgood is very encouraging," said Mrs. Davidson, "If *Mr. Osgood is interested* in Mr. Eldridge's services, we can hope that all others will be who have hitherto been indifferent to religious concerns."

"Certainly," said aunt Sarah, "there is reason for such a hope; for I always supposed Mr. Osgood to be almost, if not quite, an infidel."

"O, yes," said Mrs. Clay; "he was an infidel at the time Mr. Eldridge was ordained, and had been such for many years; he has often told me this. He has told me that he heard so much about Mr. Eldridge's prayers and other services that he thought he would go and hear him preach. After going once he wanted to go again; and so, he said, 'I have got to be a pretty constant hearer. I think he is a good man if there be one on earth, and that he is very sincere; and I can't help *feeling* sometimes when I hear him pray.'"

"Mr. Osgood may be the means of inducing others over whom he has influence to follow his example," aunt Sarah said.

"That is very probable," said Mrs. Clay. "I think he has attempted to persuade some of his companions in sin

to go to meeting. He told me that he thought he should see Mr. Tibbits in church before long."

"He was there last Sabbath," Frances said.

"O, yes," Mrs. Davidson remarked; "I saw him there, and was much surprised. Mr. Osgood was the means undoubtedly of his attendance. That will be a happy circumstance for Mrs. Tibbits. How much she has desired that her husband would attend church!"

"If Mr. Osgood has become interested in going to meeting," said aunt Sarah, "I presume his family will be more happy than formerly."

"They are so already," Mrs. Clay replied. "You cannot imagine what a new face Mrs. Osgood now wears. You know how sad, dejected, and forlorn she formerly appeared; and now she is cheerful, sociable, and very happy."

"Poor woman!" said Mrs. Davidson; "how much she has suffered in years past! She formerly was in the habit of coming here to tell us something of her trials. Her husband, when he saw her with the Bible, would be in the greatest rage, would seize the book and wrest it from her, and then would tear it up leaf by leaf and put it into the fire. She has told me that he has destroyed several Bibles for her in this manner. He would storm most blasphemously about religion, and ministers, and every thing connected with the Bible."

"Indeed!" Mrs. Clay said, mournfully. "I never heard any thing of it before."

"It is all true," aunt Sarah said. "I never pitied a woman more in my life than I have Mrs. Osgood. She told me once that her husband was so incensed at his little boy for crying hard to go to meeting that he took him and gave him the most severe whipping that he ever gave one of the children, and that weeks passed before the little fellow recovered from the effects of the blows."

"O, dear me!" said Mrs. Clay. "How could he be so cruel? He does not appear like such a man now."

"He is not naturally a cruel man," aunt Sarah said; "but he is very excitable, and he was formerly bitter in his opposition to the Bible, Sabbath, and every thing connected with religion."

"What you have now said," Mrs. Clay remarked, "explains some things Mr. Osgood has said to me. He has told me that he has not done just right in time past about going to meeting himself and having his family go likewise: but I thought he did not refer to any thing uncommon that he may have done in the matter."

"O, he did, I think," said aunt Sarah. "He doubtless thought how wickedly he had acted towards his wife and children. I rather think he has not much pleasure in thinking of what he formerly did to them."

"Well, if he now sees his wrongs and repents of them, that is encouraging," Frances said.

"It is truly so," Mrs. Smith replied; "and we ought to be grateful that God has sent us a minister to be instrumental of good to such a man as Mr. Osgood."

"We ought so," Mrs. Davidson remarked. "There is no earthly blessing more to be valued than a devout and devoted minister."

"I think," said aunt Sarah, "it must be acknowledged that *our* pastor is all that."

"Yes," Mrs. Smith said. "People in all parts of the parish will acknowledge this to be true of Mr. Eldridge. Mr. Kent, who lives near us, remarked in at our house, not long since, that he heard more said of Mr. Eldridge's prayers than he ever before heard of the prayers of all other ministers."

"That is considerable for him to say," Frances replied. "I did not know that he could use his tongue for any other purpose than to speak of making money."

"Why, Frances!" exclaimed her mother. "Are you not rather severe?"

"Well, Mrs. Smith," said Frances, "does Mr. Kent have much to say about any thing but his bargains and property?"

"Property is a pretty engrossing subject with him, I confess," Mrs. Smith replied.

"Then, mother," said Frances, "do you think I was much out of the way?"

"O," said Mrs. Davidson, "I never knew much of Mr. Kent. I seldom see him but at church."

"Nor do I," said Frances; "and Sunday noons, when I come out from the Sabbath school. I frequently overhear some of his conversation as he stands about the door or in the yard, and it is all about what he has bought or is intending to buy, or something similar."

"You have a pretty correct idea of the man," Mrs. Smith said, smiling.

"Mr. Kent, then, thinks our minister is a prayerful man?" said aunt Sarah.

"O, yes," said Mrs. Smith. "He had considerable to say about Mr. Eldridge in this respect. He told me that Mr. Lawrence said to him lately, that, if he should happen to be a special subject of Mr. Eldridge's prayers, he would surely be converted. He asked me if I thought Mr. Eldridge prayed much in private."

"That is rather a singular question," Mrs. Davidson remarked; "and an impertinent one likewise, I should think."

"Perhaps Mr. Kent had better inquire of the little girl who lives with Mr. Eldridge," aunt Sarah said. "She might give him a little insight into Mr. Eldridge's private devotions."

"What do you refer to?" asked Mrs. Davidson. "Does little Maria talk about Mr. Eldridge in this respect?"

Aunt Sarah, with a smile, proceeded to say that last week, when Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge called to leave the little girl to remain here whilst they were away from town, she had considerable conversation with her about the minister's family. "I do not now remember what occasioned the remark; but the little girl said, '*Mr. Eldridge prays a great deal in his study.*' I asked her how she knew that he was praying, and not reading aloud. 'O,' said she, 'I hear him say, "O Lord, I beseech, I pray," &c.' I asked her if he prayed every day. She replied that she hears him very often at prayer."

"Maria would not be bad authority in the case, I confess," said Mrs. Smith. "I rather think I *will* refer Mr. Kent to her if he ever should ask me the question again."

"You never told me, sister, of this conversation with Maria. She told you this when I was out, I suppose," remarked Mrs. Davidson.

"O, yes, you were out," said aunt Sarah, "I remember. I never thought it worth while to repeat what the child said, and should not now have done so but for the question which Mr. Kent put to Mrs. Smith. She gave me no new information. I took it for granted that Mr. Eldridge was a very devoted closet Christian."

"O, yes," said Mrs. Clay; "his sermons prove this. He could not produce the sermons that he gives us were he not assisted in his preparations from above."

"He could not, indeed," Mrs. Davidson said. "Any Christian can see from his whole manner that he enjoys refreshings from his Savior of no ordinary character."

Mr. Clay now entering the room where the ladies were sitting, unaccompanied by either the deacon or the squire, a little concern was manifested by Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Davidson at the cause of the protracted absence of their respective husbands. This was, however, at once abated by the remark of Mr. Clay that the deacon had gone to

the store to make a few purchases, and that the squire accompanied him. The conversation of the company was then directed to the business which had been occupying the committee and to other desultory subjects, which afforded them both entertainment and instruction for nearly an hour. Mrs. Smith at last became impatient for the arrival of her husband, knowing that she had three miles to ride before reaching home. Looking at the clock and seeing that the hour was nearly that of ten, she remarked, —

"I should really like to know what detains Mr. Smith till this late hour."

"You need not be concerned about him," said Mrs. Davidson; "for he is in *good company*."

Soon, however, all anxiety was removed by the presence of the tardy husbands; and Mrs. Davidson at once remarked, —

"Your wife, deacon, has been much alarmed about you to-night, and I did not know but that I should have to send for you."

"It is rather a late hour at which to be three miles from home, I confess," said the deacon; "but I could not very well break away before."

"What has detained you, husband?" Mrs. Smith inquired.

"Mr. Osgood was in the store," the deacon replied, "who had considerable he seemed very anxious to communicate; and so we remained to hear."

"Ah," exclaimed Mrs. Clay, with a glow of the deepest interest, "have you been conversing with Mr. Osgood? He interested you, I presume, judging from the pleasant interview I had with him last week when he called at our house."

"What he said was very encouraging," the deacon remarked. "I had no idea the man was in such a state of mind.'

"What is his state of mind?" Mrs. Davidson inquired with much feeling.

"He hopes he has become a Christian, ma'am; and he is full of wonder at the mercy of God for having continued him so long in the world, when his sins have been so great. He wept like a child as he spoke of his former treatment of his wife and children, and of his own expressions about God, the Bible, ministers, and all things of a religious character."

"Indeed! Is that possible? can it be true?" said Mrs. Davidson.

"Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" aunt Sarah inquired.

"Wonderful, it is wonderful, if Mr. Osgood has become a Christian," exclaimed Mrs. Davidson.

"Yes," the squire remarked, "it is wonderful; but I really believe Mr. Osgood is a new man. His conversation denotes great sincerity and very deep feeling. He observed that he had been interested in religion for two or three years; that what excited this interest was, noticing how much importance Mr. Eldridge attached to prayer when he called at his house, and how earnest and sincere he was when praying for all the family, and especially for himself. Said he, 'When Mr. Eldridge first called at our house there was something in his appearance that made me almost love him; and when he called again and I saw more of him, I was almost afraid to be where he was, I felt so ashamed of my past life; but,' said he, 'I wanted to hear him pray; for I felt that he was no hypocrite. If I had not been persuaded that he was a very godly and prayerful man, he never would have interested me more than other ministers have done. I have ever been pleased to have Mr. Eldridge call and to be where he is.' Said he, 'Squire, you never saw me at meeting much till since Mr. Eldridge was settled, and you never

saw me at a prayer meeting till lately; and I bless God that he sent Mr. Eldridge here; for no one else could have made the impressions on me which that man has.'"

"Has Mr. Osgood seen our pastor lately?" aunt Sarah inquired.

"I asked him that question, sister, and he said that he had not. He said that it was not a week since he indulged a hope that he was a Christian, and that he had had no time since to see Mr. Eldridge or hardly any one else."

"What great good Mr. Osgood may yet be instrumental in doing!" Mrs. Davidson said.

"It appeared to be a great object with him," said the squire, "to endeavor to do good. He told us that he had, in years past, labored hard to prejudice his friends against religion, but that now he intended to labor as hard to persuade them to seek religion. He said he had already had conversation with several of his acquaintance upon the subject."

"I dare say," said aunt Sarah, "that we shall soon hear of more cases like this of Mr. Osgood."

"It is to be hoped so," Mrs. Smith remarked. "Mr. Eldridge will be much encouraged, and so will others."

"Mr. Osgood," the deacon observed, "thinks that we shall soon have a great revival. He says people are very much interested in the minister, and are persuaded that he is a very holy and prayerful man, and are led to think much of what he says to them on this account."

"I think there is now very good reason to expect a revival," said aunt Sarah. "I have long thought we should have one in answer to our pastor's prayers, if not to those of any others'."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASTOR A SOUND THEOLOGIAN AND DILIGENT STUDENT.

It was an article of agreement with Mr. Eldridge at the period of his settlement that he should have an annual vacation of four weeks at any period of the year which would best accord with his interest or pleasure. This vacation he highly valued as furnishing him with an opportunity to relax from his severe pursuits. He improved it in visiting cherished friends and such places as would allow him, without much intellectual effort, to be adding to his storehouse of knowledge. One such period of respite from parochial toil he passed on the consecrated hill where he pursued his preparatory theological studies. Another found him at the Capitol of his country, the attentive listener to important debates in Congress by men whose eloquence and fame were the pride of their constituents and the glory of the nation. The vacation he took in the fourth year of his pastorate was spent among the hills of his native state, at the home of his childhood and youth. That his wife and children might have the benefit of the journey and the pleasure of knowing the scenes and the places which in his boyish days had engrossed so many of his hours, he made this journey in a private carriage.

A licentiate from Andover, whose parents resided in an adjacent town, was engaged by the parish committee to

supply the pulpit of the pastor for the Sabbaths he might be absent. As one of these Sabbaths would be the regular period for the communion service, Mr. Eldridge suggested that the young man might effect an exchange for that day with his own pastor, the Rev. Mr. Fisher ; which was accordingly done. As the house of Squire Davidson was near the church, and Mr. Fisher being in feeble health, he was directed to make this hospitable mansion the place of his rest and refreshment. If such direction had not been given, the horse of Mr. Fisher, which had often tested the *horsepitableness* about the premises of the squire, would have made it difficult for his driver to pass the gate without a more resolute exercise of the whip than a clergyman would care to practise on a Sabbath morning, *especially when such driver would account it a fortunate event thus to be brought up* at the door of the individual who was known in all the region as the warm friend of the ministry.

After service in the afternoon, as the squire and Mr. Fisher were sitting together, the latter remarked, —

"I perceive, squire, you take the New York Quarterly, probably for the sake of enjoying the articles which your pastor furnishes from time to time."

"Is Mr. Eldridge a contributor to the pages of that work?" the squire exclaimed, with much surprise.

"Were you not aware of that?" in as much astonishment, though assumed, Mr. Fisher inquired.

"I was not," most certainly," the squire replied. "Mr. Eldridge never mentioned to me that he was a writer for that work. For the life of me I cannot see when he finds time to write for any thing else than for his pulpit."

"That is a capital article of his in the last number on *decrees*," Mr. Fisher continued.

"Did Mr. Eldridge write *that?*" eagerly inquired the squire.

"That is from his pen," Mr. Fisher rejoined.

"I thought that article," the squire said, "the best of the entire number. I was exceedingly interested in it — so much so that I requested my wife and sister to listen to me as I read it to them."

"That is my opinion, squire. I think there is no other article in that number equal to this written by Mr. Eldridge, both as to literary and theological merit. Your pastor is getting to be one of our best theologians."

"I have thought for some time," said the squire, "as I have heard different ministers speak of him, that he was much regarded as a scholar."

"O, yes," Mr. Fisher said; "and as a theologian likewise. There is no individual in the association more confided in for correct opinions on theological points than Mr. Eldridge. If we have him to agree with us we feel that we are not heretics."

"What is his signature?" the squire asked, at the same time rising to take the quarterly from the table.

"CALVIN," was the reply.

"O, yes, I see," said the squire, as his eye glanced at the article. "I have read a large number of communications over that signature in this work. Are they all from our pastor? I have often told my wife that Calvin was the best writer of the lot, and that I really would like his acquaintance."

"You will not need any introduction to him, you see," Mr. Fisher remarked.

"No — no, sir," the squire replied; "I am very happy to know that I am already well acquainted with Calvin. I hope I shall ever value him as he deserves. He is the author, then, of that series of articles on sin," the squire continued, highly delighted at the discovery of the writer who had interested him so much.

"I perceive," Mr. Fisher said, "that you are somewhat

interested in the nice points of theology, being pleased with these articles on decrees and on sin. It is not often that I meet with a layman whose attention is particularly taken by such subjects."

"I suppose you ministers think that we common people know but little on any other subject but that which relates to our own business," the squire said, with a rather comical expression of countenance, but with great good humor.

"That is very far from being the case with me, I assure you," Mr. Fisher replied. "All that I intended was, that such articles as those referred to, being foreign to the business of other men than clergymen, would not be likely to attract the interested attention of any but ministers."

"O, I understand perfectly," said the squire. "It is not often that I find a layman who is equally interested with myself in such subjects. Perhaps the reason for this is, that I am oftener favored with the society of clergymen than most laymen."

"I am well aware, my good sir," said Mr. Fisher, "that there is a *prophet's chamber* in your house, and that your hospitality to clergymen is often the subject of their most grateful remark. It is not, therefore, surprising that you should, by your frequent intercourse with ministers, be much in sympathy with them, not only in their trials, but in their reflections upon subjects which most interest them."

"I am obliged to you," returned the squire, "for the honor you do me by your remark."

"Those articles of Mr. Eldridge must have cost him great research and study," Mr. Fisher observed. "I suppose he exchanges frequently; does he not?"

"It is very seldom that we hear any other voice in our pulpit but that of our pastor," the squire replied. "He does not exchange more than eight or ten times in the

year. He never preaches *old sermons that we know of;* and it is seldom that he preaches without notes."

"He is an uncommon man, I confess," Mr. Fisher said. "He must be a most diligent student."

"That he must," said the squire, "to accomplish for the people here what he does. I have often wondered how he could produce the discourses he gives us with all those interruptions to study which the care of our large parish brings to him. Really, I am at a loss to determine when he finds time to write for the press."

"He writes, not only for this review, but for others," Mr. Fisher observed. "One of the most important discussions which we have had of late is indebted to your pastor for its chief interest and victory. He demolished every argument of his opponents, and made the old-fashioned New England theology stand aloft and clear of all the trappings which sophistry and heresy had intwined about it."

"You very much surprise me," the squire said. "It is very singular I never heard of this before. I shall begin to fear that we shall not have our pastor long if he is such a man with his pen as you have proved him to be."

"It is by no means singular that you were ignorant of your pastor's efforts which I have now mentioned," said Mr. Fisher. "I do not think there are five individuals who know of them; and I would not have been the means of adding you to the number were it not that I know confidence can be placed in you."

"I thank you, sir, for the compliment. If it be important that the matter be preserved from the public, of course I will not speak of it. Why does Mr. Eldridge wish to be unknown in his character as a writer for the press?" the squire inquired.

"He has told me that he only lived for his people," Mr. Fisher responded; "that he did not wish for the

annoyance that would be about him were it known that he wrote for the press. He remarked that he saw the points in the case with different optics from some who had participated in the controversy, and that he thought he would present what he saw, hoping to be the means of scattering at least some clouds, if not of producing a clear sky. You need have no apprehension, sir, of losing your minister, as you have just now expressed, in his being called to another sphere of duty; for I have heard him repeatedly declare, *that, when he had done with his parish, he had done with every thing of a public character.*"

"I am glad to hear this last remark," the squire observed. "I trust it will be long before he will have finished his labors in his parish — most sincerely I do."

"I presume such is your wish and expectation," Mr. Fisher replied, "and that there is no reason to apprehend that, from any action of your parish, there will be a successor to Mr. Eldridge till death has made a vacancy here in the pastoral office."

"Though at present I am not aware of any dissensions in the parish relative to Mr. Eldridge," the squire remarked, "yet who can tell what a day may bring forth? There is such a disorganizing spirit now prevalent in the community as makes it uncertain how long any pastor will remain with his people. Were our blessed Savior now on the earth and in the pastoral office, I fully believe he would have no better assurance of permanency than he had when he went from city to city in the days of his stay on the earth. People at the present day, for a slight cause, or for no cause at all, forget the worth of a pastor which had been unanimously conceded for years, and turn him off with all the coolness and indifference that would be manifested in parting from a foreigner of a few days' acquaintance."

"You have not much sympathy, I perceive, with the

spirit of which you speak," Mr. Fisher observed. "I think your influence would preserve quiet here were there an attempt to disturb the elements."

"I cannot agree with you at all," the squire said. "Certain elements exist in our parish, which, if roused, *would ride over me, and all others like me*, in attempts to preserve quiet. Every parish is like a volcano; and the minister is never secure against an eruption. I am glad we have such a faithful pastor and such a thorough and accomplished theologian as Mr. Eldridge is reputed to be abroad. I hope he will not injure his health by his intense application to study."

"Your people are highly favored in their pastor," Mr. Fisher said. "He is much respected wherever he is known. As a preacher, he is seldom surpassed. There is no clergyman who preaches for me that is more thought of than Mr. Eldridge. The whole people love to hear him preach; and there is, I am told, a greater attendance when I exchange with him than at any other time. So, if you do here maltreat him, you may expect to have the whole region to condemn you."

"That would be no consideration at all," the squire remarked. "*What does a parish care for the opinions of neighboring parishes when they are determined to carry a point?*"

Mrs. Davidson now entering the room, her husband at once said,—

"My dear, Mr. Fisher has been giving me some new information respecting our pastor."

"Ah! What is it, husband?"

"Mr. Eldridge is a frequent contributor to that quarterly from New York which we take and to other periodicals likewise."

"That *is* new, indeed," Mrs. Davidson replied.

"He wrote that article in the last number on decrees which I read to you and sister."

"Did he, indeed?" exclaimed Mrs. Davidson. "How much we admired it! We should not have been more interested had we known who the author of it was; should we?"

"No, not any more, my dear; so they cannot say that we admire Mr. Eldridge's sermons because we like the man, and for no other reason; can they? He writes the articles over the signature CALVIN, which I have so frequently spoken of as being uncommonly excellent."

"Was he the author of *those articles?* Indeed! How much you have said in their praise!" Mrs. Davidson observed.

"Mr. Fisher tells me, likewise, that our pastor is thought by the clergy about here to be a great theologian."

"We think he is, husband; and why should not others? You know how deeply interested our people have been in the course of lectures which Mr. Eldridge has been delivering."

"Course of lectures!" said Mr. Fisher, with surprise. "May I ask on what subjects, madam?"

"He began, about a year since," Mrs. Davidson replied, "to deliver a course of sermons on the being of God, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and on the doctrines and duties made known in the Bible. The last which he delivered was on the necessity of regeneration. He delivers one on each Sabbath morning."

"I never heard of this before," Mr. Fisher observed. "Mr. Eldridge must need much time for the preparation of these discourses."

"They could not be hastily prepared," Mrs. Davidson replied, "as is evident to us all. Mr. Eldridge tells me that they cost him great labor and research. They are exceedingly well written, and as good as any sermons I ever read on such subjects. I have been more interested

in hearing him than I ever was in reading Dr. Dwight on the same subjects."

"My dear, Mr. Eldridge is a young man, and has not yet been settled in the ministry five years. How can you think him superior to Dr. Dwight?" the squire inquired.

"I know he is a young man," Mrs. Davidson replied; "but he is a great man, too."

"He must be a very hard student to accomplish what he does," Mr. Fisher said.

"He is such," Mrs. Davidson replied. "Mrs. Eldridge tells me that he is not in bed on an average more than six hours; that he studies all the morning, and will not be interrupted but by some most pressing call; that, when he visits, it is in the afternoon, and that not more than three afternoons of each week are thus devoted; and that he spends all his evenings in his study when not at the lecture, or prayer meeting, or a wedding. There can be no doubt, therefore, that he is very frugal of his time."

"Do the people like to have their pastor so much confined to his study?" Mr. Fisher inquired. "Do they not wish him to visit more than he can in three afternoons of the week?"

"There is occasionally a remark made on the subject," Mrs. Davidson said, "by some who would be better pleased with a little more pastoral visiting. But the people know *where their minister is* when he is not among them, and are generally willing that he should be in his study if he prefers; for they feel that they shall be more profited on the Sabbath if he is mostly in his study during the week. Some of us, however, are fearful that he will break down because he is so studious."

"There is not much danger of that whilst he continues in his present habits," the squire said. "He is very

abstemious and very regular in his exercise. I rather think he understands how to take care of his health."

"I hope he does," Mrs. Davidson remarked. "He is such a useful minister that it would be lamentable indeed if he should lose his health."

"I do not perceive any indications of declining health," said Mr. Fisher, "as I meet him from time to time. He endures well, I think."

"His health is very good at present," said the squire; "and I hope his present journey will contribute to its continuance. Whilst he is so highly esteemed abroad among his brethren for his correct theology and varied accomplishments, I want he should continue to pour his light around on them all, some of whom I fear are in darkness."

"Very true," said Mr. Fisher, "very true. Some of us are in the fog if not in greater darkness. All the light you can spare we will receive and employ to the best possible advantage. See to it, if you please, that you do not break the lamp from which so much light radiates, or *so conduct that it will be wrested from its place.*"

"Thank you, sir, for the caution," the squire remarked, "always a timely one; and I would that all the people might heed it."

After tea, as Mr. Fisher was leaving for his own parish, which was distant only four miles, he remarked that he should go away with very pleasing impressions in regard to the prospects of his friend their pastor. His people manifesting for him the warmest affection and highest respect, and he anxiously and studiously devoted to their best spiritual good, made his situation most useful and happy.

"It may be," said the squire, "that occasion might render it expedient and useful for me to divulge what you have said in regard to Mr. Eldridge. If there be this

occasion, may I say from you that our pastor is regarded, in the association and by others without, as a very sound and safe theologian?"

"You may say all that," Mr. Fisher replied, "and add that he is rising rapidly in favor with the great and good, and that, if he is not well cared for here, some other people will be for attempting to improve his condition by securing for their own advantage his valuable services."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PASTOR A PROMOTER OF BENEVOLENT EFFORTS.

The various enterprises of the times which shadow forth that day of glory when the dark and direful effects of the fall shall pass away, leaving in their place the transcendently beautiful hues of righteousness, had from Mr. Eldridge the warmest sympathy and the most energetic aid. None of them escaped his eye nor were without an impulse from his aid; for in them all he saw signs of triumph to that cause to which he had consecrated his life.

On a Monday morning following the Sabbath on which he had commended one of these enterprises to his people in an earnest and truthful presentation of its worth, not only to the church, but to society in general, Colonel Presbury, Deacon Barnes, and one or two other gentlemen happened into the store of Squire Davidson about the same time. The conversation for a while was upon the great embarrassments of financial affairs in the country at that time prevailing, and which was almost every where the frequent topic of remark. At length, in apology perhaps for the exercise of more than ordinary prudence in the use of that which "answereth all things," Colonel Presbury observed, —

"Our minister, Deacon Barnes, seems to think that we are not suffering much from the scarcity of money; he

appears to feel that we have enough yet and to spare. He was down upon us yesterday pretty hard, I thought."

"None too hard," said the deacon. "Mr. Eldridge did grandly yesterday. Though he was very earnest, yet he did not oblige any to give who were not disposed. He left the matter about right."

"Of course he did not oblige any to give; for he could not do that," the colonel replied. "But, then, a man cannot avoid doing something, after his duty is made so plain and the cause so important and imperative. Besides, one feels rather small in refusing to sign something when his neighbors are giving pretty liberally."

"I am pleased to hear you admit," said the deacon, "that our minister exhibits the duty of benevolence with clearness and force, and makes the particular cause he advocates tell its own claims to patronage."

"Yes, deacon, I suppose I must admit that; if I did not, I should be in a rather small company. I think Mr. Eldridge does pretty well when he undertakes with the pocket. Somehow or other he makes the money come. But what is the use of his taking up so many of these causes, deacon? He has one a month, and sometimes two."

"He considers them all very important, I suppose; as, indeed, they are. They all seem to be necessary for the benefit of our fellow-creatures and for bringing forward the day when religion shall generally prevail and all wickedness and oppression shall cease."

"Well, deacon," said the colonel, "neither you nor I will live to see that day."

"But we may hasten its approach, colonel, if we are pretty liberal and perform our other duties connected with this great event."

"It costs too much, deacon, it really costs too much for me," said the colonel, with an expression of countenance that made it evident he was sincere in the utterance.

"Last year, what I gave and what my wife and daughters gave, after the appeals of Mr. Eldridge from month to month, amounted to one hundred and twenty-seven dollars."

"I am really glad he was so successful," the deacon replied with a smile. "If he had obtained twice that amount it would have been no matter. Your purse is deep, you know."

"Really, colonel," said the squire, "you did well last year. I presume you lost no sleep by your liberality."

"No; but then I lost some money. I shall have to stop giving if Mr. Eldridge continues to call as often as he has done. He'll drain me all dry."

"You need not flatter yourself," said the squire, "that the calls upon you will be any the less frequent or urgent by reason of any backwardness on the part of our pastor in soliciting."

"I suppose not," the colonel mournfully said; "I suppose not. Mr. Eldridge thinks he is right, and there is no stopping him; he will go ahead."

"I think our people have done very well for a few years past in their contributions to benevolent objects," the squire remarked.

"They were not much disposed to give when Mr. Eldridge first came here," Mr. Parker said.

"They were not, that is true," the squire replied. "They had not been trained to benevolent habits. We are indebted to Mr. Eldridge for this process."

"Yes, yes, *we* are," quickly responded Colonel Presbury. "Mr. Eldridge has not been slow in this department of labor. We have had line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there *a good deal*, by way of instruction and appeal. If it had not been for Mr. Eldridge I should have been a thousand dollars richer — yes, *a thousand dollars richer!* I was reckoning recently what our family have given *that I know of* to different

benevolent societies for the last four years; and principal and interest make the amount a little rising one thousand dollars."

"Perhaps," said Deacon Barnes, "you would not have been so rich as you now are by several thousand dollars had not our pastor been instrumental in opening your heart and purse somewhat. I believe public opinion declares that you have added more to your property for the last three years than at any former period."

"I have not lost quite so much lately by bad debts as I formerly did," the colonel replied. "As for making money, you know any one can do that."

"If every one can make money," the deacon replied, "there are very few who succeed as you have done. You have been wonderfully prospered. I hope you will give over two thousand dollars to benevolent societies for the next four years; and I advise you to resolve to do this, or more, if you wish to continue to grow rich. I believe in Scripture promises and Scripture threatenings, colonel. I believe in this one, for instance: 'There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is the withholding more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.'"

"Well, well," said the colonel, "I shall do in the way you mention for the next four years, if I should live, *just as little as I can.*"

"O, colonel," the deacon replied, "how can you be thus ungrateful after having been blessed in the period when you have been somewhat liberal more than in any such length of time before?"

"I was not expecting such a decision from you, colonel," said the squire, "to give as little as you could."

"If I continue to go to meeting," the colonel replied, "and if we have Mr. Eldridge for our minister, I do not believe that it will be possible for me to give less than two thousand dollars for the next four years. I tell you what,

gentlemen, Mr. Eldridge has a wonderful faculty for getting away money."

"If this be your feeling," said the deacon, "I am glad of it. I hope and believe Mr. Eldridge will remain with us. If you do as you think you are likely to do, you may advance very much in property whilst you remain benevolent."

"Now that our pastor has gotten us in such a good way of giving, as you call it, I think," said the colonel, "it would be well for him to go to some of the neighboring parishes and stir them a little. Some of them might be benefited, perhaps, by his services. I should like to have him try some of them; and if he bled them pretty smartly I would not object. It would be a capital plan for the American Board or some other benevolent society to employ him. *He would raise the money for them.*"

"The attempt has been made by one benevolent society," said the squire, "to secure his services."

"It has!" said the colonel. "He has been invited to leave us, then? How much salary has he been offered?"

"Much more than he has here," was the reply.

"How lately was this offer made him?" the colonel inquired.

"About two months since," the squire said.

"He is not intending to leave us," the colonel remarked, "or he would have asked for a dismission before this, I suppose."

"I think Mr. Eldridge will not leave us at present," the squire said.

"What a noble agent Mr. Eldridge would make!" Mr. Parker observed. "His heart is so deeply interested in all the benevolent societies that he would be very likely to infuse his own interest into any audience he might address."

"If he should succeed in all congregations as he has in

our own," said the deacon, "he would truly accomplish great things for any society which might have the good fortune to secure his services."

"It is sometimes really amusing," the squire observed, "to hear what is said of Mr. Eldridge's manner of reaching the heart. You know Mr. Andrews don't believe in these benevolent societies. A few Sabbaths since it was announced that on the next Sabbath a subscription would be taken up in behalf of the sailors. In the course of the week Henry Andrews — a roguish fellow, you know — importuned his father for five dollars, for the purpose of purchasing a gun. His father, being disinclined to give him the sum, remonstrated with Henry. He told him that he had other and better uses for his money, and said a variety of things to dissuade the boy from pressing his request. Henry at last became impatient and said, 'You will give next Sunday, I dare say, to Mr. Eldridge's sailors twice as much as I ask you for now.' His father told him if he did, or if he gave any thing, he would certainly give him five dollars with which to buy the gun. Henry said no more, but was willing to wait. You remember how very earnest and interesting Mr. Eldridge was that Sabbath when he pleaded the cause of seamen, how eloquently he described their perilous condition and their indispensable agency in bringing to our shores the products of foreign climes and of taking to these regions our own surplus commodities, and withal how truthfully he painted the representative character of the sailor, and thence deduced the importance that he be both qualified and disposed to give the true representation of the land of his birth. Well, after the subscription had been taken and the services were closed, I met Henry Andrews as I was passing out, and from his looks I perceived he wished to speak to me. I addressed him, and gave him opportunity. So he at once said that he would like to see the subscrip-

tion paper which had just been circulated. Taking the paper from my pocket, I handed it to him. I saw he looked confused after examining it a moment, and I asked him if I could assist him in any way. He said his object in looking at the paper was to ascertain if his father's name was on it. I informed him that it was, and at once showed it to him. 'Good — *good*,' said he; 'father is down for ten dollars.' His joy was so great that I could not resist the promptings of my curiosity, and I asked him what pleased him so much at discovering that his father had given ten dollars. He then told me the story of the gun, and appeared sure that he should now have it."

"That is pretty good," said the colonel. "I knew Mr. Andrews gave ten dollars, for I heard him speak of it. He said that he did not intend to give a cent. When he went to meeting he determined that he would not patronize these societies — that he would keep his money for *useful* purposes; but he said Mr. Eldridge obtained the advantage of him. He lost control of himself, and was forced to surrender his own judgment to the reasoning and conclusions of the minister; and he put down ten dollars for the sailors."

"You heard of the effect of that sermon on Mrs. Pitcher; did you not, colonel?"

"I have heard nothing," was the reply.

"My wife was telling me," said the squire, "that a sister of Mrs. Pitcher, who resides in Boston, has been out on a visit lately, and that Mrs. Pitcher was very much taken up with a silk dress worn by her sister, and was determined to have one of a similar pattern. She supposed her husband would begrudge the money, and that fifteen dollars would come hard from him for a single dress. However, she ventured to encounter his rebukes of her extravagance, and requested the requisite sum, at the same time saying that she knew of no reason why she

should not have a dress equal to that of her sister. So, after the exercise of all her tact and eloquence, she succeeded in obtaining from her husband the amount she desired. Her sister was expecting to return home the next week, and Mrs. Pitcher was intending to send by her for the dress. The Sunday following Mr. Eldridge preached in behalf of seamen; and when the subscription paper was handed to Mr. Pitcher he did not look at it; but, being passed onward in the pew, his wife took it and put down ten dollars. After she returned home she acquainted her sister with the fact, and remarked that she did not know but that she should have to do without her silk dress; for she was so much overcome by Mr. Eldridge's sermon she could not resist her convictions of duty, and subscribed ten dollars for the sailors."

"That's good!" exclaimed the colonel. "I am really glad Mr. Pitcher got bled so; but I hope his wife did not lose her dress."

"No; she did not," Mr. Parker observed; "but her husband was mighty poor for some time afterwards. I had occasion, about that time, to borrow some money for a few days; and, as I had often been accommodated before by Mr. Pitcher, I called upon him for the loan. He replied that he did not know as he had so much money as I wanted — that he was poor and did not know what he should do. 'My family,' said he, 'are getting to be very extravagant. I have had to give Mrs. Pitcher lately thirty dollars to buy a dress; but ten of it, I hear, went to dress the sailors.' As he said this he looked not very kindly at his good wife; but she explained the matter and laughed very heartily all the while; and I could not avoid joining her. Her husband at last was obliged to give in and laugh too."

"Poor man!" said Deacon Barnes. "I suppose Mr. Pitcher is worth seventy-five thousand dollars."

"Yes," said the colonel, "all of that; but he is poorer than most men who are not worth five hundred dollars. I am glad his wife gets some of his money; I wish she might obtain three hundred dollars where she now gets but thirty."

"People don't seem to think any the worse of Mr. Eldridge for his efforts in raising money for objects of benevolence, do they, squire?" Mr. Parker inquired.

"Not that I have heard," was the reply. "I believe they are pleased that he is so successful."

"He does some good at home, I confess," said the colonel, "when he labors for money to be sent abroad. He opens some hearts that never showed any doors before. Some people are the better, I have found, for giving; they are more like human beings than formerly; they have more feeling; they show a better spirit."

"That is one of the effects of benevolence," the squire rejoined. "I have often heard Mr. Eldridge remark that he valued the benefits which accrued to his own people from their giving about as much as those produced abroad by their benefactions. The reflex influence of benevolence he thinks very great and powerful."

"That is a new idea to me," said Mr. Bolles, who had entered the store after this conversation began; "but there may be some foundation for it, I confess. So Mr. Eldridge is thinking of home when he is laboring for objects abroad?"

"Certainly, my good sir," said the squire; "he thinks of his people first and last; and in all that he undertakes he has an eye to their good."

"Well, then, no one can blame him for being so wide awake in his efforts for all the benevolent societies," Mr. Bolles continued, "when he sees that the influence of the liberality of his people is to benefit them."

"I do not see how Mr. Eldridge can be censured," said

the squire. "For my part, I value him the more for his energy and perseverance in advocating the different benevolent societies. If Mr. Eldridge imitated the example of some ministers and was silent in relation to the calls of these societies through fear that his activity would conflict with the attachment of his people to their money, he would not accomplish half for our good that he now does, nor be half so much worthy of our love and respect."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PASTOR'S ACKNOWLEDGED CARE OF THE YOUNG. — INTEREST IN THE AGED AND THE IGNOBLE.

The wealthy and learned in the community are not the only individuals of influence ; there are other classes who at times wield a tremendous power. There are those who are set aside by the popular voice as incapable of much effect, who nevertheless exert an influence by which the greatest ends are sometimes achieved. It often becomes important to collect the scattered fragments of influence ; and for this purpose the partisans enthusiastically engaged in achieving a triumph for their cause with the greatest energy and perseverance explore every nook and corner of society to discover any thing to aid them, and with joy and exultation hail any power, however feeble or obscure, which promises the least assistance in accomplishing their object. This last source of power, though usually accounted by the multitude as of little moment, is yet often great and decisive, both in the arena of political and civil strife and in ecclesiastical concerns. As a party in either sphere may have such power in its favor, so its vote is triumphant and its cause victorious. The little children of a religious community, who are never consulted when their parents are canvassing the qualifications of the different candidates in nomination for political promotion, and the aged men and women, who are contemplated as in

waiting for an introduction to another sphere of existence, having long since been made of no practical account in the one where they are now numbered, and the poor and ignoble, who are regarded more like an incubus than a blessing to society, are made to come forth at times in a parish and exert a power that controls the destiny of its pastor. Hence it is always considered a fortunate position for a pastor when he has the interest of the children enlisted in his favor — when he has the expressions of love and attachment from the poor and the ignoble. Hence, too, a minority opposed to a minister account it much to their advantage when able truthfully to report that he is lightly esteemed by the children and an object of dislike by the poor and the lower classes of society.

Whatever was the motive of Mr. Eldridge, or whether he was prompted by any specific policy in his movements, one thing was very apparent; and that was, that he had the blessings of the aged abundantly upon him, the warmest affection of the poor bursting forth from hut and hovel at his side, as well as all the interest which sparkling eyes and prattling tongues of children could convey whenever the pastor was in their circle or his name mentioned in their presence.

"What are those boys and girls trying to do?" said Mr. Lovell, from New York city, who was the guest of Squire Davidson, when walking with him about the village.

"What boys and girls?" inquired the squire, looking about in search of them.

"Over there by the tavern, a little this side; there are thirty or forty of them," Mr. Lovell replied.

"O, yes; I see them now," the squire remarked, looking that way. "Let us stop a while and see what they are up to."

Soon Mr. Eldridge was seen coming from the post office.

As he advanced towards the children there was great commotion — laughing, shouting, and a variety of movements which denoted that great pleasure was in anticipation or in enjoyment. When Mr. Eldridge had approached very near where they were the children opened on the right and left, the boys with their hats and caps off, and the girls courtesying, and all most respectfully greeting the minister they loved. Having passed through the line, Mr. Eldridge turned round and stood as if speaking to his young friends. Then they gathered around him, and he took them severally by the hand, exchanging congratulations with them. The squire and his friend were the while approaching and much enjoying the scene.

"The little folks seem highly pleased with their minister," Mr. Lovell remarked, addressing Mr. Eldridge.

"They usually anticipate seeing me here about this time of the day as I go to the post office," Mr. Eldridge replied. "Their school has just closed, and they want some diversion."

"They do not appear to be afraid of you," said Mr. Lovell.

"I hope not," Mr. Eldridge replied. "I should regret very much to have any boys and girls in the parish in the slightest fear of me. I ever encourage all to approach me with the same familiarity that they do their parents."

"I have often noticed," said the squire, "the same kind of regard for you before; and when my attention was called to the children by my friend as we were walking by the graveyard, I stopped to allow him to witness their doings."

"It is a very pleasing spectacle, truly," said Mr. Lovell, "and auspicious of good, when children manifest such deep interest in their pastor; for children are a mirror in which their parents can be seen."

With a grateful and gracious bow Mr. Eldridge bade

adieu to these gentlemen, being desirous of speaking with another individual who was passing in a carriage. Resuming their walk, Mr. Lovell remarked, —

"Mr. Eldridge must have a very strong hold of the young people of his parish, I should judge."

"He has an uncommon share of their interest and affection," the squire replied. "I do not remember ever to have known a pastor so generally beloved by the younger portion of his flock as is the case here. As much interest would be expressed in as many children in other parts of the parish as was manifested here just now."

"It is a fine thing that it is so," Mr. Lovell remarked. "If the children have affection for a pastor they will be pleased in hearing him preach, and will be inclined to treasure up his instructions in their hearts."

"We have found this to be case," the squire replied. "We often hear that children in the parish consider it a very heavy trial when it is necessary for them to be absent from church on the Sabbath. They are so much interested in Mr. Eldridge as to be unwilling to be deprived of the pleasure of hearing him preach even for a single Sabbath. That they remember what he preaches we know, from the fact that in the Sabbath school they give us a very accurate account of the sermon. It is truly astonishing to hear some of them repeat what they have heard. They will give the text, chapter and verse, the subject and divisions, of the discourse; and frequently, in answer to the questions of the teachers, will bring out quite a respectable portion of the sermon. I often think that I could not have given so intelligent an account of the preaching as I frequently hear from some of the children."

"They are not excited to treasure up so much of the discourse by any expectation that Mr. Eldridge will know of it, are they?" Mr. Lovell asked.

"I presume that consideration has influence upon them,"

the squire replied; "for it is often that the pastor visits the school and is present when the children are giving their account of his discourse."

"It must be a great source of pleasure as well as hope to him to know that he has such retentive hearers in the younger part of his audience," said Mr. Lovell.

"Undoubtedly it is," said the squire, "and very gratifying to the children likewise to have Mr. Eldridge aware how well they remember his sermons. I have often heard that some of the children have been much pained at not giving so full an account of the sermon in the Sabbath school as they had previously given to their parents, because they supposed their failure was noticed by the pastor."

At the dinner table, around which the squire and his friend were summoned, as they entered the house on the conclusion of their walk, Mr. Lovell, addressing Mrs. Davidson, remarked,—

"I have been highly delighted this morning with the discovery of excessive interest on the part of your young people here in their pastor."

"Indeed!" said the good lady. "And what may it be?"

The gentleman then proceeded and narrated what has just now been under the eye of the reader, when Mrs. Davidson observed,—

"That was an interesting spectacle, was it not, Mr. Lovell? It is always pleasant to notice in children respect and affection for their minister. Mr. Eldridge has many such demonstrations of regard by his little parishioners."

"He has a wonderful faculty of interesting the young," Frances remarked. "They all think much of him. In a neighborhood about three miles from here, where there are quite a number of children, last spring the girls were in the habit of meeting every Saturday afternoon in the

school house for the purpose of preparing some testimonial of respect for the pastor. They met in this way for two months, we heard, and made a large and splendid bed-spread. When it was ready to be put together and quilted their mothers and older sisters were invited to Mrs. Kimball's, where they had a fine quilting party. An invitation was given to Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge to favor a few of their friends with their company in the evening. The work was all completed before dark and ready for a formal presentation. Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge in the evening joined this happy company, and were somewhat surprised at noticing that pretty much all the people in the neighborhood were present, and that, instead of seeing a few, they had the pleasure of welcoming many of their friends. They had not been at Mr. Kimball's an hour before it became evident to them that some other reason than the enjoyment of a mere social visit had gathered their friends together. There was the arranging of chairs around the room in a peculiar order, and the company taking their seats upon them, with an expression of countenance every now and then upon some of them that unmistakably told Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge there was a *secret* about to be revealed. Then a large table was rolled into the centre of the room, and soon two young ladies entered, bearing a long roll, tastefully folded and tied with ribbons. Then Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge were asked to occupy two chairs near this table and roll; and opposite them three young girls seated themselves. Whilst all this was going on conversation was generally suspended. On the part of the pastor and his wife there was the silence of suspense; but on the part of the others there was the impatience for the crowning scene of the evening. All the preliminaries being arranged, one of the young ladies, who sat opposite the pastor and his wife, arose, and in a neat and appropriate manner made known the real cause of the present gathering.

In doing this many very complimentary things were said of the pastor and his companion. To prove that the heart was in these expressions of respect and affection, and not the tongue only concerned in them, she observed that her young associates and friends who were present had for weeks been engaged in fashioning a memorial of their feelings, and which it was now her happy fortune, in their name, to present to her pastor and wife. Instantly the other girls by the side of the speaker unrolled the fabric that had lain on the table, and it appeared most beautiful indeed. Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge were taken by surprise, being wholly unaware that any such expression of friendship was intended, and both were much affected."

"That must have been a most interesting occasion to them, I confess," Mr. Lovell remarked. "I suppose the article presented cost the young ladies much labor and anxiety."

"O, yes," said Frances, "and not a little money too. It was certainly a magnificent piece of work for the kind. It was composed mostly of silk and satin, and very richly embroidered. It was thought that it would sell readily at auction for thirty or forty dollars."

"As Frances has given you information of the generosity of the girls," the squire observed, "I will tell you what the boys did last winter."

"I should be happy to hear," Mr. Lovell said.

"Last winter," the squire continued, "we had a large quantity of snow in this region, and some of the older boys started the project of making the minister a present of a load of wood. The plan was, that each boy should obtain from his father as much as he was disposed to give and deposit the same on a piece of ground near the school house. When all had made their contribution, a day was fixed upon to convey the wood in a single load to the parsonage. Accordingly, at the appointed time, the boys

met at the school house to load up. They first loaded one sled and drove it along a little way. Then they loaded another and drove that along to the first load, and attached it firmly to the same by chains. In this way they proceeded till the whole lot of wood was all loaded up. They then put on their team, which consisted of seven yoke of oxen, and drove down to the minister's in high spirits. This team, and those interested in its management, attracted great attention along the road; and when it reached its destination there were more than a hundred men and boys around, who had fallen in along the route. Mr. Eldridge, hearing quite a tumult about his premises, was somewhat alarmed, on opening the door, to see such a collection of people. Somehow or other the wood escaped his notice; and he was not aware that it stood by till he was asked by a little fellow, who, for his brightness and intelligence, had won the name of *John Quincy Adams*, if he would accept of a *small load of wood*."

"He made no objections, I suppose," said Mr. Lovell.

"Of course not," the squire proceeded; "but he was exceedingly overcome, I assure you. In common with others, as the load passed my store, I followed on. After the wood was unloaded, little John Quincy Adams, in behalf of the donors, addressed Mr. Eldridge in a short speech, which was touching in the extreme. It must have made Mr. Eldridge feel that he was beloved by all the young people of the parish. In concluding his remarks, John Quincy said that, if agreeable to Mr. Eldridge, the boys would meet on the next Saturday and saw, split, and pile up the wood."

"That was a very handsome thing," said Mr. Lovell. "How much wood did the load contain?"

"It was thought there were over eight cords of it," the squire replied.

"That was a most valuable present, I confess," said

Mr. Lovell. "They met, I suppose, and sawed and piled the wood as proposed?"

"That they did," the squire replied; "and there was a large company together at the time. The news had spread; and boys far and near were there with saws and axes, which were used most industriously till the whole work was done; and the whole lot of wood was sawed, split, and packed away in the the wood house before one o'clock."

"The minister had a large company at dinner that day, I suppose," Mr. Lovell said.

"He might have had, had not his intentions been frustrated by some of the people in this neighborhood, who thought they would like a share in the doings of the day. They got up a dinner at the tavern for about two hundred persons; and all who were at Mr. Eldridge's, whether as workers or spectators, were invited there to dinner."

"The dinner must have cost a large sum," said Mr. Lovell. "Tavern keepers don't work for nothing, you know."

"It must have cost something, of course," said the squire; "but the dinner was not provided by the landlord of the house. The families in the village here furnished the tables, each contributing meats, puddings, pies, &c. The landlord, being a generous man and a lover of good times, offered the gratuitous use of his hall, tables, crockery, &c."

"All this is worth knowing," Mr. Lovell remarked. "Was an account of the affair ever published? It ought to have been."

"A long article in reference to it was written by one of our young men," the squire replied, "and would have been published had not Mr. Eldridge interfered to prevent it. He said he did not like to have a great noise made about himself in the community. He acknowledged, however, the kindness in a brief card in the papers, but

not in a manner to bring out all the facts as I have now stated them."

"I should think," said Mr. Lovell, "Mr. Eldridge must feel that he has one of the very best of parishes."

"There is human nature here, after all," the squire somewhat dryly replied. "We are by no means perfect."

"We have a pastor, Mr. Lovell, who understands very well how to get along with all classes of his parishioners," aunt Sarah said. "He is attentive to every one, and all seem to think he is their peculiar friend. You would be much interested in hearing some of our poor people speak of him and to know of many expressions of their attachment."

"That is another star in your pastor's crown, I suppose," Mr. Lovell replied.

"It is much in his favor," aunt Sarah said. "Some ministers seem to think it is not of much consequence whether they pay any particular attentions to the poorer classes or not. They appear to feel that, if they can keep on the right side of the more influential members of their parish, they will have no cause for trouble. I don't know as this *is* their feeling, but it looks like it."

"O sister, you must not judge ministers so harshly," interposed the squire. "They are not all constituted alike, you know."

"Ah, well," aunt Sarah continued, "I think a minister ought to be conversant with all his people; he ought to know them all, and especially those in the lower walks of life. They are greatly comforted by being noticed by the minister, and greatly benefited likewise. Only think how much pleasure widow Tompkins takes in telling of the attentions she receives from Mr. Eldridge."

"This is all true," said the squire. "I acknowledge it all. It *is* very important that a minister does not overlook the poor and the ignoble; but you know that some

clergymen are of such a temperament as leads them to neglect particular attentions to any. Some neglect the rich as much as they do the poor; and they are good ministers, too, for all this."

"I wish all who neglect the poor would come here and take lessons of our minister," aunt Sarah rejoined. "Let them go with him to Mrs. Snowden's, and widow Tompkins's, and some others whom I could mention; and, if I mistake not, they would be induced to search out for similar persons in their own parishes, and be comforted and encouraged in their labors by their conversation and experience."

"I should judge from this remark, Miss Davidson, that these cases to which you allude were interesting ones," Mr. Lovell observed. "Will you enlarge a little?"

"I must refer you to Frances," aunt Sarah replied, "as she often accompanies Mr. Eldridge to widow Tompkins's and some other individuals like her."

"As Mr. Eldridge often has our carriage," Frances proceeded, "he frequently invites me to ride with him; and I always feel it a privilege to accept his invitation. I have been with him several times to Mrs. Tompkins's, who resides some four miles from here, and has been confined to her room for several years with the dropsy. She is very poor, and has but one child at home. Last week I was there without Mr. Eldridge, having begged the privilege of accompanying father, who was going by her house, that I might remain with her till his return. I had scarcely been seated before she expressed her great regret that Mr. Eldridge had not come with me. 'You don't know how much I enjoy his visits,' she said. 'His conversation makes me think of his great Master, who sought opportunities to do good to the poor, the sick, and the afflicted. He seems to be very different from other ministers I have known; he cares for all, whether rich or poor, high or

low. Sometimes when he has been here I have thought he cared for the poor more than he did for the rich, and I have heard a number of poor people say it seemed just so to them. He comes to see me about once a month, and I have a feast when he is here that lasts me a great while. He makes me forget my pains and trials, and carries me away to heaven, so that I long to be there. You can't think,' she said, 'how different he is from our former pastor. He used to come once or twice a year, but did not seem to enter into my case. I did not get much sympathy or much good either from him. He always seemed to come *because he thought he must*, and not because he wanted to. Now, Mr. Eldridge appears to have pleasure in calling, because he feels that he is doing good. O,' she continued, 'I am under the greatest obligations to him, blessed man! He has taught me a great deal about Christ and heaven.' She went on in this way for some time, giving expression to her exceeding interest in our pastor. I could not help thinking whilst she was speaking that all she said was true; for certainly when I have been with Mr. Eldridge he appeared just as she described."

"How long has she been sick?" Mr. Lovell inquired.

"About twenty years," Mrs. Davidson replied.

"She ought to have sympathy from some quarter, I think," Mr. Lovell said.

"She certainly ought," said Mrs. Davidson; "but, poor woman! she does not receive much. She lives on a road that is not much travelled, and there are not many who are sufficiently interested in the poor to go and see her. I am highly gratified with Mr. Eldridge's attentions to her."

"Mr. Eldridge treats all the poor and afflicted just after this manner," aunt Sarah remarked. "There is Mrs. Snowden, a pious woman I believe, but who, for some reason or other, has not been much cared for, who thinks

a great deal of Mr. Eldridge. She has a very bad cancer in her face, and looks so disagreeable that people don't like to go there. She is very poor, and cannot for this reason do as she would — keep herself and room looking neat. Mr. Eldridge goes there once a week, I believe; and people tell me that she is very much comforted by his visits. Brother says, when he calls there to make her a present of things she needs for her comfort that she is almost all the time talking about our good minister. 'He can't think himself a bit better than I am,' she often says."

"Mr. Eldridge must be a most excellent man," said Mr. Lovell. "I always like to hear that a minister is praised by the poor and those in the humbler walk of life."

"This class here all speak well of Mr. Eldridge," Frances remarked. "I never heard a word of complaint from any of them that he was proud or indifferent to them."

CHAPTER IX.

THE PASTOR A REVIVAL PREACHER.

On a pleasant day in February, as Squire Davidson was standing at the window after dinner, he noticed a sleigh approaching the house from the road below, and exclaimed, —

"I wonder who is coming here? O, I see now; it is Mr. and Mrs. Jaquith, from Linebrook parish."

"Are they here, husband?" said his wife. "I am very glad of it. They have come over, I dare say, to attend some of our meetings."

Soon Mr. and Mrs. Jaquith were seated around the cheerful fire, apparently much pleased that they were again with those from whose society they had derived so much happiness on repeated occasions heretofore.

"We hear you are having precious times over here," said Mrs. Jaquith; "and I have been telling husband for a week or two past that we must ride over and attend some of your meetings. I hope you are to have a meeting this evening."

"We are," Mrs. Davidson replied; "and this afternoon likewise."

"It seems you have heard of our revival," the squire observed.

"We have heard very much about it," Mrs. Jaquith replied. "Mr. Mandel, you know, is over here from our

place two or three times a week; and if any individual would be likely to know of a revival, he is the one. He is very much interested in calling upon us from time to time to give us particulars of the work. He says he must always call when he is passing and tell us the glorious news."

"It is a glorious season, I assure you, that we are now enjoying," Mrs. Davidson remarked. "I never before knew such a revival as this."

"You are highly favored here, I think," Mrs. Jaquith said, "in having such frequent revivals. This is the fourth, I believe, since Mr. Eldridge was settled."

"I believe we have had three seasons of interest before the present," Mrs. Davidson said; "but neither of the others approached this in power and extent."

"It is a great blessing to be favored with such a revival preacher as Mr. Eldridge," Mrs. Jaquith observed. "I often tell our people that if we had such a preacher we should have revivals."

"Is not your minister, Mrs. Jaquith, a good preacher?" the squire asked, in an earnest, if not in a reproving, manner. "We call Mr. Sibley a most excellent man, and preacher too, over here."

"Certainly," Mrs. Jaquith replied; "Mr. Sibley is a good preacher, and a very consistent and conscientious man; but then he is no revival preacher."

"My husband," Mrs. Davidson interposed, "is not partial to comparisons of ministers, being a great friend to them all. You will therefore, Mrs. Jaquith, excuse his earnestness, and place it to the account of his long acquaintance with you. We think as you do, that our minister is a revival preacher."

"I would not have you think, squire, that I undervalue Mr. Sibley," Mrs. Jaquith observed, with a good-natured smile. "Perhaps I did not express myself with as much propriety as I might have done."

"Such modes of speaking are very common, madam, and indicate a feeling with which I confess I have not much sympathy," the squire replied. "I have long been of the opinion that both ministers and churches were much injured by such comparisons as you have just made between your minister and Mr. Eldridge. Churches are injured because they serve as a palliation for their neglect of duty, and ministers are often injured by these comparisons because their tendency is to prejudice minds against the one who appears to the least advantage in the comparison. If a stranger to both ministers were here, he would undoubtedly have had an unfavorable opinion of Mr. Sibley from your remark. All ministers are not alike, and it is for important purposes that there is a diversity of gifts. I think there may be as fair a prospect of a revival under the preaching of Mr. Sibley as under that of Mr. Eldridge, *if the people do their duty faithfully.*"

"O, then, you think the people in Linebrook are not as good and faithful Christians as your own people?" Mrs. Jaquith said, with a little excitement.

"Not exactly that, my good friend," the squire replied. "I have had the impression that your people attached a greater load to their minister than he could carry — that they expected more of him than is reasonable. It will not answer for the members of a church to feel that they have no responsibility in relation to the progress of religion — that they may attend to their own concerns and yet the work of the Lord be carried prosperously along by the minister. I have thought that your church had the feeling that it all depended on Mr. Sibley whether religion prospered among you, and that his success was in no way connected with their prayers, sympathy, and general coöperation. I may be deceived, however; I hope that I am. Now, with us, we think Mr. Eldridge is a man in need of *help, encouragement, and of our persevering prayers;*

and that he will be prospered or hindered in his work in proportion to our own fidelity in these several respects. Now, I think, if your people would rally around their minister, and manifest an interest in him and in his labors, and would pray much for him and his success, you might have revivals as frequently as we do here."

"There is some truth in your remarks, I confess," Mrs. Jaquith said. "We are in the habit of thinking that it depends upon the minister; and, in helping or encouraging him much, I think we are very deficient. You know our people are very *industrious* and think they have no time for other matters but those which relate immediately to their own business."

"There, that is it," the squire said; "but your people wish to be like other people; they want as successful a minister as any parish enjoys, and yet are indisposed to make the necessary sacrifices. Now, they must alter radically, or no minister will be successful among them."

"Well, squire, I wish you would go over there and tell us our duty and endeavor to infuse into our people the right spirit. They think much of you; and I do not know of an individual who would have more influence over them."

"I am obliged to you for the compliment," the squire replied. "If I could be of any benefit to your people, it would give me much pleasure to be with you at some of your meetings."

"O, you could be of great benefit, I have no doubt," Mrs. Jaquith remarked.

"What evening do you have a prayer meeting?" the squire asked.

"We have no particular evening," Mrs. Jaquith replied. "Formerly it was Wednesday evening; but of late we have not had prayer meetings often. Mr. Sibley became discouraged. The members of the church did not have

any interest in them. Sometimes there would be a deacon there, but not very often; and at last it was very common for no other male member of the church to be present but the one at whose house the meeting was appointed. However, if you will go over, we could have a prayer meeting appointed almost any evening."

"I am really afraid it would not amount to much should there be a meeting called merely to hear me talk a little while," the squire said. "I do not see what ground there is for expecting success to any religious efforts whilst the people are so spiritually dead as their indifference to a prayer meeting fully demonstrates."

At the appointed hour the squire and wife, with their friends, repaired to the vestry to attend a meeting for conference and prayer. The spacious room was crowded, and the adjoining rooms could hardly seat all who were present. The deepest solemnity sat on every countenance, and strong anxiety was on many an awakened sinner.

"What a meeting we have had!" said Mrs. Jaquith, as she was seated in the parlor of the squire. "How very solemn and interesting! How animated and eloquent Mr. Eldridge was! O, I should think people would feel where he is! He certainly understands how to get to the heart."

"He does," Mrs. Davidson replied; "there can be no mistake about that. I do not know what he might do in a place where the people were all spiritually dead; but he has certainly been instrumental of great good since he has been here."

"Don't you think he would wake up a dull and worldly church if he should be settled over such?" Mrs. Jaquith inquired.

"I cannot tell," Mrs. Davidson replied. "There is a kind that goeth not out only by prayer and fasting. Paul may plant, Apollos water; but God must give the

increase. If there were not a praying church there could not be much ground for hope. I think Mr. Eldridge would not remain long with a people who were indifferent to spiritual progress and neglectful of the means for effecting it."

"I cannot but think," Mrs. Jaquith said, "that your pastor would rouse up careless professors; his appeals could not fail to do this. They would have to feel, act, and pray, I am sure. Don't you think some ministers can do this work with more success than others?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

"Well, that is what I think," said Mrs. Jaquith; "and I meant only that this morning in the remark that excited your husband a little, you remember."

"I rather think," said Mrs. Davidson, "that our minister would not have much success among your people unless the Holy Spirit was with him."

"No, certainly not," Mrs. Jaquith replied; "but would he not be instrumental in stirring up the church so that they would pray for the Holy Ghost?"

"O, I do not know how that would be," Mrs. Davidson replied. "You know it is hard for the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots. From what I have heard, your deacons and leading men in the church are excessively worldly. They much prefer being where they can advance their temporal interest than at a prayer meeting. Unless they felt differently from what they now do, I do not believe Mr. Eldridge or any other minister would do much good there."

"It is very trying, I confess," Mrs. Jaquith said, "to see such individuals as you mention so bound up in this world. I know our people look up to them, and they are much censured for their worldliness; but could not a minister rouse them — such a minister as Mr. Eldridge?"

"Perhaps for a little time they might be more engaged

outwardly if they had a new minister ; but it would not last long. I think," said Mrs. Davidson. "You know how greatly Mr. Richardson, your former pastor, was tried by the worldliness of your church. He was a rousing preacher, I am sure. He used to tell us he was discouraged because the deacons and other men of influence would not work with him, being so much engrossed with their plans for making money. He mentioned that he had labored hard with them to persuade to a different course, but that all his labor was lost. There is your Deacon Merill : Mr. Richardson used to say of him that he appeared much more interested in his own business than in the conversion of sinners or the prosperity of the church."

"The deacon formerly felt very different from this. He was once a very engaged Christian."

"Yes, I have heard that he was," Mrs. Davidson said. "Mr. Colton, who preached for you considerably in a revival you had fifteen or twenty years ago, told us that the deacon was then very much engaged and very active. But he has changed his opinion of late. He was here lately, and, in speaking of your parish and of Deacon Merill, remarked that he was astonished to notice his very great decline in piety."

"He made the same remark at our house," Mrs. Jaquith said, "when he called there as he was on his way to visit you. He said that until Deacon Merill was a changed man, as he had such influence, it would be impossible for Mr. Sibley or any other minister to do much good there. I thought he was rather severe on the deacon at the time ; but I have since altered my mind."

"Well, Mrs. Jaquith," said the squire, who had just come in with her husband, "how were you pleased with our meeting this afternoon ?"

"Very much pleased indeed," Mrs. Jaquith replied. "I do not remember that I ever was at a meeting which I

enjoyed more. I thought all were very much engaged, and that your minister was particularly so. I should think there was great depth to the religious feeling here."

"Yes, I think there is," the squire remarked, "and that the interest is daily becoming greater. I have just been conversing with Mr. Eldridge, who gives a very favorable account of the work."

"I hope that I shall derive much benefit myself from being with you," Mrs. Jaquith said. "I already see things in a new light, both as respects myself and our people."

"That is encouraging," said the squire. "I trust we shall all be profited by the interesting occasion we have enjoyed."

"Mr. Eldridge is very well fitted to promote religious feeling, I think," said Mrs. Jaquith.

"He is," said the squire. "He is a very good man, and rejoices in seeing the work of the Lord prospered. We have every reason to be satisfied with him. He does all that a man can do."

"O, yes," said Mrs. Jaquith. "He looks very much exhausted. His labors must have been very great."

"They have been excessively arduous," Mrs. Davidson replied. "He is at work all the time, and we are fearful that he will overdo and be under the necessity of suspending all effort."

"That would be a great trial to you all as well as a hinderance to the revival, would it not?" Mrs. Jaquith inquired.

"We should all very much feel the trial if Mr. Eldridge's health should fail and he be unable to continue his labors. The interest here might be checked, I think, by such an event."

"How many conversions have there been among you since the commencement of the present revival?" Mrs. Jaquith inquired.

"We do not know exactly," Mrs. Davidson replied. "We have heard that between sixty and seventy are indulging hope."

"That is a large number," Mrs. Jaquith said. "Should there be no others, the accession of these to your church would very much increase its strength. Your church now, I believe, is very large."

"It is one of the largest in the region," Mrs. Davidson said. "It has increased very much since Mr. Eldridge has been with us. Forty-seven a year is the average number which has been received by our present pastor."

"That is a large number," Mrs. Jaquith observed. "I cannot avoid feeling that your great prosperity is in a great measure to be ascribed to the engagedness of your pastor. He must be a revival preacher, or you could not have had such constant additions to your church."

"We know that Mr. Eldridge is a revival preacher," the squire replied. "He is called such all over the parish, and has had this character for years."

"I inferred from what you said in the morning, squire," Mrs. Jaquith observed, "that you did not allow that he was more of such a preacher than other ministers. I thought it was your opinion that he was mainly indebted to his church, under God, for his usefulness,"

"I do think so," the squire replied; "that is, I think, if our church did not sympathize with Mr. Eldridge and cooperate with him, that he would not be as useful as he now is and as he has been."

"Supposing any other minister to be your pastor, would his usefulness be as great as that of Mr. Eldridge, provided your church were faithful in the discharge of duty?"

"Some other minister might have equal success," the squire replied; "but not every minister would. I would not be understood as saying that it all depends upon the church whether a minister is or is not successful. I

acknowledge that much is depending upon the talents and devotedness of the minister. Some ministers would do well here who might not be equally successful elsewhere; and so some ministers might be instrumental of accomplishing great good elsewhere who would fail here altogether."

"Now, squire," Mrs. Jaquith asked, "do you not think that some ministers are more revival preachers than others?"

"I suppose I must say that I do," was the reply."

"Mr. Eldridge is one of those preachers, you have said. You and I agree much better now than in the morning, I think," Mr. Jaquith said. "You have said that it is difficult for one to avoid feeling under Mr. Eldridge's preaching; and I said in the morning, that, if we had such a preacher as Mr. Eldridge, I thought he would make our church feel and do their duty."

"He might make them feel, I acknowledge," the squire replied; "and yet, when they went out from his presence and mingled in the world, their own business would make them *feel more.* I do not doubt that Deacon Merill and others in your church often feel under Mr. Sibley's preaching."

"O, I know they do," Mrs. Jaquith said.

"Why, then, do you not have revivals?" the squire asked.

"I do not know," was the reply; "but, then, I think we should if Mr. Eldridge was our minister; he is different from Mr. Sibley."

"It might be," the squire said, "that Mr. Eldridge would be successful, with the blessing of God, in rousing your church, and thereby inducing them to be more consistent and active; but he would have a hard matter of it, I apprehend. Should he do this, you might have revivals. Until Christians do their duty, the ministry will not be

successful ; the word preached will be powerless. I wish your church and every church felt this, and then I think we should hear less fault found with ministers because they were unsuccessful, and more said in their praise because of their instrumentality in leading many souls in the path to heaven."

CHAPTER X.

VISIT OF A CONNECTICUT PASTOR.

Squire Davidson being a native of Connecticut, as has already been stated, cherished that particular interest in the noble state which her character for all that is good ought ever to inspire in her children. After his removal from her territory he continued to cultivate that intimate acquaintance with whatever affected her prosperity which could be done by frequent visits and correspondence. By a large circle of warm friends there as well as in the state of his adoption he was regarded with the highest respect for the uniform consistency of his piety, and for his straightforward, decided course in relation to every project which had for its end the good of his species and the glory of his Creator. Often has his house enclosed a happy company who had journeyed thither from the vicinage of his native home to strengthen or renew the acquaintance that began in youth. Often, too, have many who never knew him but by report been incited by the fulness of this report of his worth to attest the truth of what they had heard by a visit to his hospitable abode.

Many a clergyman from Connecticut and other parts had been directed, for miles around his house, as they asked the way to Squire Davidson's; and all these worthy men ever found themselves the welcome guests of a man whom they confided in as one of the strong pillars of the church.

The good minister of his native town, who was often among the crowd during election or anniversary week in Boston, was frequently heard by his wife to declare that he hardly knew which motive had the strongest power to urge him on to Boston in the month of May — either that in the opportunity for seeing and hearing the great and the good in the various convocations of the church, or that of a visit to the minister's firmest friend, in the person of Squire Davidson, near whose house his route lay to Boston. Probably, when meditating on the journey at the period now to be described, the good man was at no loss to determine the strongest incentive to his course. The desire to enjoy the wise counsels and warm sympathy of the squire was predominant; for he did not allow himself but one day in Boston, preferring to pass between three and four with the squire.

Rev. Mr. Edmands, the clergyman above alluded to, had been settled in the native town of Squire Davidson eleven years. Though not the greatest theologian of the times nor the most eloquent preacher, yet his talents were very respectable, his acquirements equal to the average class of ministers, and his piety and devotedness to his Master's service were far beyond those of many of his brethren in the region. In the years of his pastorate he had been singularly successful among a people who had been riven by previous strife; and he had won over, by his humble, wise, and consistent course, many an individual who had avowed erroneous doctrines, and who had gone down to practices at a great remove from the way to heaven. The great truths of revelation which had been the subjects of ridicule ceased almost entirely to yield mirth; and the obloquy which had, in no contracted measure, been poured out on those who were attached to the visible kingdom of Christ, was so far wiped away as to allow the common remark, that there was something in religion of advantage

to man in the present life, and of indispensable moment to him in the life which follows. The church under his ministry had repaired its foundations, which former contentions and inconsistencies in its members had greatly shaken and enervated. It had been greatly strengthened, too, by additions of those who had formerly been the opposers of its doctrines and the scoffers in the community. The Sabbath congregation, instead of the meagre assembly within the house of God when Mr. Edmands began his ministry, had waxed so great as to make it necessary to enlarge the sanctuary to give the worshippers room. Business had greatly prospered, and the general aspects of the place had undergone a most pleasing revolution. Common acclamation ascribed all these important events, in a great measure, to the prudence and devotedness of the pastor. So many expressions had Mr. Edmands of the confidence and affection of his people as to induce within his breast the feeling that no other parish would ever be sought by him. The remark in neighboring towns was frequent among the people there residing, and who often interchanged feeling with Mr. Edmands's parishioners, that he was just the man for them, and that they were wonderfully attached to him. No intimation of dissatisfaction reached his ears from year to year; and every thing favored the conclusion, till a few months before his present visit to the squire, that Mr. Edmands's parish would never think of another pastor till his grave had been made in their own cemetery.

In the annual visits of Squire Davidson to the home of his childhood and youth he had taken great pleasure in hearing from the people of their growing attachment to their pastor and of witnessing the beneficial results of his ministry. He, too, thought that it would never again be his grief to know of another change in the pastoral office there, unless it was effected by the death of the present

pastor. It was, therefore, no pleasing object to him that Mr. Edmands disclosed as the reason of his present visit that of seeking counsel in relation to the difficulties which had suddenly overtaken him. The squire, however, was not wholly taken by surprise; for a letter from his sister living in her native place, which he received a few weeks before, had apprised him that clouds now darkened her pastor's sky. As his friend broke to him the unpleasant intelligence he betrayed no previous knowledge of the case, being desirous to have Mr. Edmands unembarrassed in his statements of the causes and kinds of trouble which threatened the rupture of his pastoral relations.

With these preliminary remarks the reader can enter with greater interest in the following conversation of the Connecticut pastor with his friend, after the two had been together but a brief period.

"Is there any thing new in your parish?" the squire inquired.

"Some of the people are expecting something new, I believe," was the facetious reply.

"What is that?"

"A new minister," Mr. Edmands replied.

"A new minister! a new minister! What do you mean?" the squire with emotion asked.

"I mean that I am thinking of asking for a dismission," Mr. Edmands replied.

"I have thought such a thing impossible," the squire observed. "When I have been to your place from year to year I have been greatly gratified in witnessing increasing attachment to you from your people; and I have supposed, after what has been brought about by your instrumentality, as they all allowed, that you was fixed there for life. When I was there last fall I never heard more satisfaction expressed with their minister, and I comforted myself with reflecting that the good old times were

returning to my native town when the people looked upon their pastor as settled with them for life."

"I had no thought of leaving my people last fall when you were there," Mr. Edmands replied. "I was then as contented and satisfied as ever; but you know the tables with ministers nowadays suddenly turn."

"I know it," said the squire; "I know it to my bitter sorrow. The churches are in a sad condition. The pastoral relation is too lightly esteemed, and almost any cause can sunder it; and frequently for no cause at all it is annulled. I often wonder how any young man dare look towards the profession of a clergyman, when there is so much evidence at hand that it is often a *life of servitude to the facetiousness and cupidity of the people.*"

"There must be ministers, you know," Mr. Edmands said, "and——"

"Yes," said the squire, very quickly, thereby abridging the remark it was the intention of Mr. Edmands to make, "I know there must be ministers; but I am sometimes afraid there will not be many soon."

"If poor human nature rules," said Mr. Edmands, "I think ministers may by and by be few. The precariousness of the tenure which now holds a minister to his people is so great, and the consequences to himself and family of its rupture are so disastrous often, as makes the office of a minister any thing but desirable, so far as the present world is concerned."

"That is true," said the squire, "and my heart has often bled at the distress I have seen in the very best of ministers, who have been dismissed for no fault whatever of their own, but merely to gratify the pride or some other selfish interest of their people. It is for this reason, I fear, that young men may be deterred from entering the ministry. But what is the reason of your thinking of asking for a dismission?"

"I fear," said Mr. Edmands, "that I can be no longer useful to my people."

"What is the matter, pray?" asked the squire. "You must have been guilty of some conduct which has suddenly alienated your people from you, if you can do them no more good. You have been doing them good now for ten or twelve years, and I can't think they are yet perfect."

"Ah, well," said Mr. Edmands; "but I think I have done all for them which I can do whilst the present feeling continues. I suspect they want a different minister."

"Have they found any fault with you?" the squire asked.

"They have not," Mr. Edmands replied. "I have not heard a word of fault found with any of my conduct; and Deacon Glover says that he has never heard a syllable uttered to my discredit."

"Well, Deacon Glover, I suppose, does not approve of your proposed course?" said the squire. "Or have you had any conversation with him on the subject?"

"O, yes," said Mr. Edmands; "I have talked with him freely on the subject, and I rather think it is his opinion that I had better leave."

"Deacon Glover thinks you had better go away?" said the squire. "Last fall, when I was there, he told me that the people were never better satisfied with you than they were then, and that it was the general opinion that you had not only saved the church from ruin, but that you had been the means of all the prosperity of both the church and parish. He said the people felt very grateful to you because you had been the means of so much good to them. 'Why,' said he, 'our meeting house never would have needed enlargement had it not been for the kind and conciliatory course of Mr. Edmands.' The deacon cannot now think that you had better go away."

"He does, for all that," said Mr. Edmands; "for he told me as much as to say '*that I might be more useful*

elsewhere.' He said that *he* was satisfied and did not wish for any change on *his own account, but* that there were some of the people who did."

"Who are they," asked the squire, "who are they, who wish you to go away? Did the deacon inform you?"

"I asked the deacon the same question," Mr. Edmands replied; "but he said *he thought he had better not inform me.* He said there was not any one who had any thing against me — that all the people respected me and loved me."

"I have heard before of such honeyed reasons for the dismission of a pastor," said the squire, "and I most heartily condemn a people for their use. Why not state frankly and freely the true cause? I should think Deacon Glover would be ashamed of himself to converse with you after this manner. If I was satisfied with my minister, and there were some who thought he had better ask for a dismission, whilst they said they respected and loved him withal, I should say to them, I would never advise him to leave, and that I would sustain him with all the power I could command."

"If Deacon Glover would take this course," Mr. Edmands said, "he would have great influence, I have no doubt. He might be instrumental in quelling any little excitement which might exist unfavorably to me; but I rather think he will not take a decided stand in my favor."

"Has not the deacon told you of any reason urged by the people in favor of your going away?" the squire asked.

"No; he has not," was the reply. "He says there is not much of any reason given. My wife, however, tells me that she heard from old Mrs. Goldsmith that some of the people wanted a *smarter man* than the present pastor."

"That is it, is it?" said the squire, rising and pacing the floor. "They want a *smarter man.*"

"Yes. She said that Mr. Sampson, who bought the house and store near the tavern about a year ago, thought that the people were now able to have a *first-rate* minister. They had a good large meeting house; and they might get as smart a minister as any other parish had. She said there were several young men and women who felt as Mr. Sampson did."

"I suppose, then," said the squire, "that this Mr. Sampson has been exerting himself against you pretty much ever since he moved into town. As he has some property and can make a good appearance, people look up to him some. Probably he has flattered Deacon Glover considerably, and inflamed his pride, and fixed him up for an instrument to aid in your dismission. It may be Mr. Sampson has made the deacon feel that the parish will run down if they do not have what he would call a *smart* man. Well, how does Deacon Greene feel?"

"The deacon, at first," Mr. Edmands answered, "was very warm in denouncing the whole movement. He talked with me with tears in his eyes when I first spoke to him about going away; but last week I saw him again, and I inferred that he was leaning towards Deacon Glover in feeling."

"Did not Deacon Greene tell you that Mr. Sampson wanted you to go because he wanted a smarter preacher?" the squire inquired.

"He did not," Mr. Edmands said. "He told me, at my first interview with him, that he did not know of any one who wished for another minister, though he had heard there were some who had such a wish. He then said he hoped that I would not think of going — that he never would vote to have me dismissed. Last week when I saw him I did not ask him if he knew who wished me to leave, nor did he tell me. I considered it strange that he should appear so reconciled to my going away when he

was so strenuous for my continuance the first time I conversed with him on the subject."

"He lives one side, you know," said the squire, "and don't see many people. Probably he had not seen Deacon Glover nor heard any thing from him in relation to the case when you first saw him. Before your second interview he had conversed with Deacon Glover, and probably was influenced by him; as I have long known he is inclined to hearken to what he says."

"Yes," said Mr. Edmands; "he told me when I last saw him that he had heard nothing only from Deacon Glover."

"That is the way 'tis done," said the squire. "One or two restless spirits in a parish, for some pretence or other, wish for another minister; they get up a little commotion, and then go to a deacon, and either flatter or frighten him, or both, and get him started on their side. He puts in a paddle with them and stirs the waters a little, and by and by some others join; and in this way they soon have the poor minister all spattered over; and then the multitude begin to cry, he is so spotted that we must have another minister. Well, Mr. Edmands, from what you tell me, I think pretty much as you do — that your usefulness among your people is over whilst the present feeling continues. You have given me no new information; for I had a letter from sister a short time ago, in which she stated to me the substance of what you have now related."

"Ah," said Mr. Edmands. "Has your sister written to you upon the subject? Had I been aware of that, I would not have been so particular in my statements."

"I thought such might be the case," the squire replied; "and, being anxious to have a correct account of the matter, I thought I would not apprise you that I was in any way informed respecting your difficulties. Sister's

letter and your conversation essentially agree. I will read you what she wrote on the subject."

"I should be happy to hear," Mr. Edmands replied.

The squire, taking the letter from his desk, read as follows: —

"You will be very much surprised to learn that there is some trouble here in relation to our good minister. Notwithstanding our fond hopes that he would be permitted to spend his days with us, I fear we shall be disappointed. It seems that Mr. Sampson, who bought the store and house here about a year ago, has never thought that Mr. Edmands was a very great man, and has been exerting himself to raise a party against him. He has not, however, obtained many to join him in open opposition. There are a few young men here, over whom Mr. Sampson has had great influence, who sympathize with him. They have been very active of late in their efforts to prejudice people against Mr. Edmands. As they belong to different families, their influence will be felt. It is said Deacon Glover has become much alarmed, and fears the parish will be broken up if Mr. Edmands does not ask for a dismission, and that he thinks he had better do it. It seems very strange to me that the people are willing to lose Mr. Edmands when there are so many here who esteem him so highly. If his friends would only bestir themselves and take a decided stand, I have no fear that Mr. Edmands will go; but somehow or other they are disinclined to move. I have heard a great many say that they set every thing by our pastor and cannot bear the thought of his leaving; and yet they don't do any thing to show their warm attachment or to put down the opposition. I was talking with Mr. Rawson the other day, and he said it was really too bad for Mr. Sampson to come into town to make trouble and excite opposition to our minister; but that

he did not know but it would be the *easiest way to have peace to let Mr. Edmands go.* Deacon Greene, they say, talks pretty much in the same manner. All say that Mr. Edmands is a good, nice man, that he has been the means of doing a great deal of good here, and that they never shall have another minister who will be so much devoted to the spiritual good of the people; *and yet they will be still and let a few turn him away.* I think Mr. Edmands's friends act very wickedly in not rallying around him and manifesting a strong determination to keep him. If Deacon Glover would take a firm stand in his favor he would stay, I know, for the deacon has great influence; *but he is afraid,* if he acts in favor of the minister, the church will be destroyed and the meeting house deserted. He says *it will not injure Mr. Edmands to go; he is such a good man that he will soon find another place.* Now, I think it will be a great damage to Mr. Edmands to go. He has built him a pretty house, and has set out a great many trees, and the people have encouraged him all along with the belief that he would spend his days among them. If he should go away, I am much afraid he will be discouraged and will never again labor with the zeal and resolution he has manifested here. When I think upon the subject I am almost distracted. Only think — a good, faithful, and successful minister being driven away by six or eight individuals, when the great body of the people are satisfied with him, and yet will not exert themselves to have him remain through fear the parish will be broken to pieces! I wish you were here as one of the parish; for I know you would not be afraid to act. I understand Mr. Edmands is going to Boston the latter part of the month; and I presume he will call and see you on his way. I hope you will comfort him all you can."

"That is a very kind expression of feeling towards you," the squire remarked, as he folded the letter.

"Certainly it is," Mr. Edmands replied. "I am obliged to her for it."

"Do you owe any thing on your place?" the squire inquired.

"No, sir, I do not; I paid the last dollar for it about six months ago."

"That is good," said the squire. "Well, I suppose the place would sell for more than it cost you, as property has advanced there considerably within a few years."

"I suppose it would," Mr. Edmands replied. "It might sell for two or three hundred dollars more. Mr. Sampson would like to buy it, I guess, for his son. He has asked me several times if I would sell."

"He has?" said the squire. "Well, I should not be surprised if he has been actuated by some selfish motive in his opposition to you as much as by a desire for a smarter preacher. His son is in business with him, I suppose."

"Not yet, I believe," Mr. Edmands replied. "He is about twenty years old. The report is, that when he is of age he is going into partnership with his father."

"Yes, yes," said the squire, "I see. Your house is near his store, and a very pretty house it is too. You have a variety of fruit trees and of shrubbery which are now valuable, and the eye of Mr. Sampson has been directed that way. If, now, you go away and wish to sell your place, you just let me know if Mr. Sampson makes you an offer for it. If it is not as much as you think the place worth, I will make you an offer too. You need not fear that you shall lose any thing by building. You have been settled, I think, about eleven years," said the squire, "and are now about thirty-five years of age?"

"I was somewhat advanced when I graduated," Mr. Edmands answered, "and afterwards I taught school three years for the purpose of paying some of my college bills

and of getting a little something for my expenses in the theological seminary. I was not settled till I was thirty-one years old."

"You are now forty-two," said the squire, "and the best part of your life has been spent with your present charge, doing them good — great good. You have now five children. Well, it is a hard case to be obliged to seek a new home, I confess."

"I think it is," Mr. Edmands replied; "and I dread it. A dismissed minister does not have so fair a prospect of being settled as one who has never been ordained."

"Many times that is true," said the squire; "but I hope there will be no difficulty in your case. You ought not to be under the necessity of seeking a new parish. I cannot get over the conduct of some of your people in being willing to have you leave merely to gratify the pride and perhaps advance the pecuniary interest of one or two individuals. If you should go, I shall feel that God will visit this iniquity on the church in some way or other, to bring them to realize what they have done. I have known of instances where good and faithful ministers have been dismissed for reasons as weak and wicked as those which are influencing your people, and their parishes have smarted under the scourging of divine Providence."

Soon after Mr. Edmands returned home he was induced to request a dismission from his people. He advertised his house for sale, and it was not long before Mr. Sampson made him an offer for it — less by two hundred dollars than it cost. One or two other similar offers were tendered. At last Mr. Edmands wrote to the squire and apprised him of the matter; and in return he received a letter from his friend, in which he made him an offer of three hundred dollars more than would cover the expense of building. Accordingly, the squire became the pur-

chaser. He had not been in possession of the estate many months before Mr. Sampson made proposals to him to buy. The squire fixed his price, which was two hundred dollars in advance of what he paid; and, after vain attempts on the part of Mr. Sampson to induce him to take less, he paid the squire his price and received a deed. The squire enclosed the two hundred dollars to Mr. Edmands and was satisfied altogether with the speculation, with the reflection that he had saved one minister at least from the jaws of a shark.

The reader, and especially if he be a minister, and one, too, who has been dismissed, with a valued house and cherished fruit trees planted and nurtured by his own hands in his possession, will doubtless think that a Squire Davidson is not in every community.

CHAPTER XI.

A DESTITUTE PARISH.

Mr. Eldridge, having been settled about eight years, had acquired a high reputation in the community and was a favorite clergyman in the adjacent parishes. Consequently, in the absence of regular pastors on journeys or otherwise, his services were often requested in the solemnization of marriages and in the attendance of funerals. No pastor in the region performed so much out of his own parish as was rendered by Mr. Eldridge. Death having deprived a somewhat large society of a highly respectable and beloved pastor, after the members of the association to which the deceased belonged had alternately supplied the pulpit for the benefit of the widow and children, his people began *to hear candidates* for settlement. Being a desirable location, many individuals were recommended to the committee of supply by clergymen and others as being well worthy to succeed to the pastoral office among them. The people were led to believe from the large number of candidates thus recommended that they were an important people; and of course they erected such a standard of ministerial perfection as made it necessary to hear candidate after candidate. Though all had a high standard, yet there were not many among the people who had the same ideal of the man who was worthy

of the place in their pulpit and affections. It had not been noised abroad that they were remarkably discriminating and speculative in their theology; but in their new position it came out that there were old schoolmen and new, Hopkinsians, &c. They were not known abroad as a remarkably literary people; for the reason, perhaps, that so long a time had elapsed since they were favored with a settled ministry, and there was no particular occasion of their manifesting all that they knew. But *now* it was surprising to notice the value they placed on scholastic accomplishments and literary attainments. Their neighbors in adjoining parishes had not supposed from their *every-day manifestations* that pride had much to do with them; but their mistake was duly discovered and acknowledged before the eighteenth candidate departed.

In the period of their destitution, after a large number of young men and men in middle life had been to this parish, tried in the balances and found wanting, a request was made by one of the deacons, who went over to see Mr. Eldridge, that he would preach the lecture preparatory to their sacramental occasion. With this request Mr. Eldridge agreed to comply, and accordingly went over and fulfilled his engagement. Before the services he had no conversation with any one of the people; for he did not arrive in town till about the hour at which the lecture was appointed. As he was well known to the people and highly respected by them, there were many in waiting in the aisles, and in the porch and yard of the church, to take him by the hand and have a little conversation with him. If they all had been a *special committee* appointed for the very purpose, they could not have better discharged the duty of consulting him in regard to their condition and of inquiring for a *suitable man* for their pastor.

When he descended from the pulpit and had reached

the aisle, he was first saluted by a good old lady, who manifested great joy at seeing him once more.

"I've been wishing a long time to see you, Mr. Eldridge," she said; "for I thought you'd know of a good minister for us."

"I hear, my good friend," Mr. Eldridge replied, "that you have had a large number of good men to preach for you of late. Were there none among them who would *answer?*"

"I know we've had a great many candidates; but, somehow or other, the people don't take to any of them. We ought to have a settled minister here; for we now have no one to attend funerals and see the sick."

"Well, ma'am, if I could help you to a pastor it would give me great pleasure."

Passing on a step or two, Mr. Eldridge was greeted by a gentleman and his wife, who were very glad to see him. Said the lady,—

"Mr. Eldridge, what do you think is going to become of us? Do you think we can *ever* find a pastor who will *answer* for us?"

"I hope so, certainly," Mr. Eldridge replied.

"Well, I am almost discouraged," said the lady. "I do not see any prospect of our being suited."

"Have not any of the individuals who have preached for you given satisfaction?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"Some of them *ought to have satisfied us*," the lady replied; "for we have had already no less than *forty-three* different candidates."

"That is a large number out of which to make a choice," Mr. Eldridge observed. "Have you not been united in any of them?"

"No, sir, we have not," said the husband; "and I think it is discouraging."

"I am fearful," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "that your

church do not look aright to the great Shepherd to send them a pastor after his own heart; for, if he is properly inquired of, he will answer prayer."

"That is what I have been telling our people," said the lady. "We *forget* God, and are *trying to please ourselves*."

Stepping a little farther, Mr. Eldridge was brought to a circle of four ladies and gentlemen. Said one of the gentlemen, —

"Mr. Eldridge, don't you think it is time we had a pastor?"

"I do, most assuredly."

Said another gentleman, —

"Do you think we shall ever find any one who will unite us?"

"If among the *forty-three* candidates you have had, as I am just informed that is the number, there was none fitted for you, I do not see *much prospect of there being one found*, I confess, who will unite you," Mr. Eldridge replied. "I have known of your having had preach for you some of the very best of men; and there were two or three young men in the number who for talents and promise are equal to any."

"I know," said one of the gentlemen, "we have had most excellent men here to preach for us, but none of them seemed to unite us."

"I should think from your remarks," said another gentleman, "that it is your opinion that we ought to have been united in some one of the ministers who have preached for us. I would like to know which of them you mean."

"There is Rev. Mr. Allen, who preached for you four Sabbaths, he told me; and a better minister I do not know," Mr. Eldridge replied.

"Well," said the last gentleman, "he *was* a good preacher, and he suited *tolerably* well; but some of the

people thought he would not answer because he had not a very good delivery."

"He is thought to be a very good speaker," Mr. Eldridge said. "Perhaps he is not the very best; but he is much more than an ordinary orator."

"He would have suited us if it had not been for this one thing."

"What was the matter with that Mr. Lane who preached here?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"Mr. Lane, Mr. Lane," repeated the gentleman. "I do not seem to remember him."

"O, that little man, father," said his wife, — "*that little man* that they talked so much about."

"O, yes, I remember now — Mr. Lane. O, he would not answer for us; he was nothing more than a mere boy. As soon as he was seen entering the pulpit we all thought *he would not answer;* for he was not dignified enough for us."

"That was all the objection to him, was it," said Mr. Eldridge, "his small stature?"

"I never heard of any other. His preaching all liked very much," said the gentleman.

"Well, what objection was there to Mr. Reed?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"We ought to have settled him," said one of the ladies. "He was a fine preacher, and a very sociable, pleasant man. He was very well liked; but, because he had *red hair*, some of the people said they could not vote for him. They said the hair was a small circumstance; but it made some talk among the young folks, and that, when they were about it, they might as well as not get a minister who was good looking."

"Yes," said Mr. Eldridge; "I suppose your people think they can have what minister they please, *if they can only find one who will please them.*"

"That is it," another of the ladies remarked; "that is just what I have often told some of the people. They think *any minister* would accept a call to settle here *provided* a call was given. Such a feeling I do not like myself. I think it will be some time before we get a pastor unless the people alter some of their notions."

"I am fearful that this may be the case," Mr. Eldridge replied.

"I don't believe in being so particular about every little thing in a minister," the last lady said. "I think it is very sinful. Now, we have had, I believe, some of the very best of ministers to preach for us. Almost any one of them was, if any thing, too good for us; and yet some little trifling thing or other has kept us from giving a call to either of them."

"You know, Mrs. Dimmick," said one of the gentlemen, "we were going to give a call to one of them, but ——"

"Yes, yes," she said. "There was a clergyman from New York who preached here one Sabbath who was out of health, and was spending a few weeks in the town where the young man who was then supplying us resided. It being communion Sabbath, and as the young man was not ordained, he requested this New York minister to come over and administer the sacrament. This circumstance was not generally known, and so he was taken for a candidate of course; for every one who preached here was looked upon as a candidate. This man was not liked by many at first, because he spoke so low; but when they found out that he was settled in the city they were going to give him a call. They would really have done this had not the young man, when he came back, told us it would do no good."

"I never heard of this before," Mr. Eldridge remarked. "Perhaps the New York minister would have felt himself highly *honored* with a *call from your people*."

"Our people feel a little mortified about this," Mrs. Dimmick continued, "and don't like to hear any thing about it."

After this manner did our Mr. Eldridge make his egress from the pulpit through the aisle to the porch of the church, where he met with others, who, before they left him, had something to say of their prospects of having a settled minister. Why they remained destitute when they had so many candidates, some assigned one reason and some another; and it was a fact which made no slight impression on Mr. Eldridge's mind that *no two individuals assigned the same reason;* yet all *appeared* extremely anxious to have a pastor, and *were willing to submit to almost any sacrifice if they could only obtain the right kind of a man.* When he reached the yard and was making his way to the shed back of the church, where he left his carriage, he was followed by three gentlemen, whom he found to be the committee for supplying the pulpit. They seemed to think that they had a pretty difficult task to fulfil, and all were rejoicing that the annual meeting of the parish was near, when they could resign their committeeship into other hands. One of them remarked, —

"I had no idea that we should be troubled so to find a minister to suit us. I thought there were a *plenty* of ministers, and that we should find the right kind of a man in two months; but I have been sadly disappointed. Ministers are rather *scarce, I should think;* are they not, Mr. Eldridge?"

The gentleman appeared so sincere in his bewailment over the dearth of candidates that Mr. Eldridge found it no easy matter to so adjust his facial expression as not to betray the true sentiments of his heart as his laughing powers should have full play; for he was thinking of the *forty-three* candidates the parish had already had; but he succeeded in preserving his equilibrium and gravity, and coolly remarked, —

"I fear there *may be* a scarcity of ministers, if there be not one already."

"We've had a pretty hard time of it," said another of the committee; "and, for my part, I am completely discouraged. I have been to Boston six or eight times on purpose to inquire of the city ministers if they could not send us *the right kind of a man;* and I have been to Andover four times on the same errand. I told the professors there what kind of a minister *we must have;* and yet here we are without a pastor and without any prospect of one, so far as I can see."

"Did not the professors think they could send you a suitable man?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"O, yes; they mentioned several young men, who they said were very promising as to talents and piety; and I went and saw them all, and agreed with them to come here one after another if it should be necessary."

"Did they all come?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"Yes, sir; they all came, every man of them, one after the other, and preached; but neither of them was *just the thing for us.*"

"It is extremely unfortunate," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "that there is no one to be found who *is just the man for you.*"

"Well," the last gentleman said, "I am going to make *one pull more* for a pastor; and if I don't succeed, I've done. I am going to start next week for New York, to see if there ain't some ministers that way. We've tried pretty much *all* we could hear of in this region."

Said Mr. Eldridge with great solemnity and earnestness, —

"Gentlemen, it appears to me *that pull*, as you call it, is not so good a one as another I could mention."

This remark of Mr. Eldridge excited hope in the minds of all the gentlemen that relief would speedily be brought

to them in the person of a clergyman whom he could recommend as being *just the man* to unite all parties and humor all tastes. Particularly the one who was designing to make one more "*pull*" was unusually excited, and at once asked, —

"What is your plan, Mr. Eldridge?"

"Since I have been here," Mr. Eldridge replied, — "since I have been here, engaged in conversation for a few moments, I think I have learned from one and another what is the real condition of this people. It has been impressed upon my mind that you did not realize what you wanted in a pastor, and had not looked to the great Being who giveth pastors and teachers, and asked of him, with humility and submission, to send you a suitable minister. Now, my advice to you is, to *stop* hearing candidates for a few weeks, and get your pulpit supplied by some one who does not wish to settle, and, in the mean time, for your church and people to humble themselves before God and seek from him a pastor. If you do this sincerely, I have no doubt that the Lord would interpose and send you a pastor in whom you all will be united."

Whilst Mr. Eldridge was thus speaking it was observed that the gentlemen of the committee — and particularly the one who was intending to make another "pull" — were somewhat abashed and disconcerted; for after he had done there was profound silence, neither of them having an answer at hand. At length one said, —

"I think your advice, Mr. Eldridge, is very good; and I will mention it to the people."

Mr. Eldridge had no more interruptions and proceeded to his carriage, in which he was soon conveyed to the house of Deacon Follet, where he had engaged to stop for tea. When he entered the house he found there an old clerical friend of his own as well as of the deacon, who a

few moments before had rode up to make a call as he was passing on to his home in a neighboring town.

"You were detained some time," Mrs. Follet remarked, "were you not, Mr. Eldridge, by our people? We waited at church a few moments for you; but, seeing you busy in conversation, Mr. Follet said we would go on without you."

"I have had quite a time of it," Mr. Eldridge replied; "but I have acquired a pretty good knowledge of the state of your people. I had no idea you were in such a condition."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Follet, "the people have been talking to you about a minister. That seems to be the only topic of conversation nowadays."

"Yes; they have," Mr. Eldridge replied; "and, from what they said, I think your parish is not in a very hopeful condition."

"We are in a *most dreadful condition*," Mrs. Follet remarked. "There is no such thing as a minister's suiting us. I don't know what will be the result. Sometimes I think we shall be broken all to pieces. Only think, we've had above forty different ministers preach for us since last December, — not quite a year, — and none of them seemed to answer but one! A gentleman from New York preached last summer one Sabbath; but the people did not know who he was or where he was from at the time. They supposed he was a candidate of course; and there were some who thought he would not answer; but when it was ascertained that he was from New York the case changed, and there was quite a stir about a parish meeting for the purpose of giving him a call; and I really believe they would have done this had not Mr. Byron, who was then supplying for us, assured the people that it would be of no avail."

The deacon coming in from the barn, where he had

been to take care of Mr. Eldridge's horse, Mrs. Follet observed, —

"Husband, Mr. Eldridge has had quite a time of it at the meeting house since lecture. He has heard considerable news about us here."

"I presume so," said the deacon. "I dare say he has been applied to by a dozen or more to recommend candidates."

"Well, deacon," said Mr. Eldridge, "I shall not recommend any candidates to you at present. I think there have been already far too many."

"That is a fact," said the deacon; "and if I were in your place I would not encourage such a state of things as we have here. Our people are not in a fit condition to hear candidates. They don't know what they want. We have now had forty or more good men here, and yet none of them suited. Some were too short and some too tall; some had light hair and some red; some had too many children and others had not any; some were old-school men and others new; some walked too moderately and were lazy; others walked too fast and were not dignified; some stammered and others talked like lightning; and in this way one little foolish thing or other has been raised into a bugbear to keep us from having a settled minister."

"O husband," said Mrs. Follet, "you are exaggerating. No one has objected to any of the ministers on account of their hair."

"Yes, my dear, there has. Mr. Olney and Mr. White had no other objection to Mr. Reed but his red hair."

"How do you know that?" the wife inquired.

"O, it leaked out through their children," the deacon replied.

"I knew they were not inclined to settle Mr. Reed,"

Mr. Follet said. "I asked Mrs. Olney one day what objection she had to him. I saw she did not seem ready to answer, and that she had no very definite objection. I should not think they would object to a man's hair, if what was under it was good."

"I rather suspect," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "that you are not among the difficult ones, Mrs. Follet."

"I think," she replied, "that I could have been satisfied with almost any one of the candidates we have had. Our people ought to have been united in one of them and settled him before this. A large part of them have been ordained or installed over *other parishes*, some of which, for numbers, wealth, and intelligence, are far before our own."

"Then you think all parishes are not as difficult and fastidious as yours?"

"Indeed I do," Mrs. Follet replied, "though I think a very wrong spirit enters very often into a people when looking for a pastor."

"There are some parishes, however," Mr. Eldridge observed, "when destitute of a pastor, who act with great wisdom and with much Christian principle. They show themselves to be competent judges of the qualifications of a pastor."

"Yes," said Mrs. Follet, "I know there are some such parishes. It really does one good to think of them. They do not appear to feel that they must have perfection in a pastor, and wait and wait, hearing different ministers continually, in expectation of finding perfection at last. However, parishes of this description at the present time are few and far between. The great majority, when hearing candidates, are in the exercise of a very improper spirit."

"I do not know but that is true," said Mr. Eldridge. "I see too much of such a spirit, I confess."

"It is melancholy," said Mr. Harris, the clergyman before alluded to,—"it is melancholy to notice the fastidiousness of many of our parishes when they are seeking to settle a minister. I have thought that the influence of this feeling has checked a desire on the part of young men to study for the ministry."

"It may have been one cause to produce this result," Mr. Eldridge said. "Many pious young men, I know, when they leave college study other professions. It is by no means surprising that a young man should be affected by such a state of things as we know exists among this people, for instance."

"It was new to me," said Mr. Harris, "that the people here have already had upwards of forty candidates. They have rather surpassed the people in G——."

"Have not the people there yet settled a minister? I thought brother Swift was going there," said Mr. Eldridge.

"No; the call was not sufficiently unanimous to suit him," Mr. Harris said. "There was a large minority who were opposed to his settlement."

"I am really sorry to hear of this," said Mr. Eldridge; "for I was hoping *that parish was now satisfied.* Who is preaching there now?"

"Mr. Anybody, I believe," said Mr. Harris.

"Well, there are quite a number of clergymen by that name," said Mr. Eldridge. "I very often hear of them in vacant parishes, and I think they must be a very poor supply."

"But a little better than Mr. Nobody, I think," said the deacon.

"From what I have heard," said Mr. Harris, "since I have been here, I should think the parish in G—— to be very much like this people. I was conversing the other day with brother Thompson, who formerly was settled there,

but who was dismissed on account of ill health. In remarking about his old people, he said, 'They are in a sad state there now.' He recently received a letter from one of his former parishioners, from which he inferred that the prospect of their having a pastor was very dark. He read to me a paragraph descriptive of the state of things there, which so accurately portrays the condition of many other parishes when hearing candidates that I was induced to request of him a copy, which he at once wrote and gave me. I put it in my wallet; and I believe I have it with me now, and will read it if you please."

"If it describes our case," said the deacon, "I should like to hear it; for I cannot believe there is any other parish so difficult as ours."

"You can judge now for yourself," said Mr. Harris, as he proceeded to read as follows: "'We have no settled minister yet, and I do not know as there is any prospect of our having one very soon. From thirty to forty different men have preached here; but not a *perfect* man was there in the whole lot. One preached too long, another was too brief; one was too slow, another spoke too fast; one spoke too loud, another quite too low; some were too flowery in their style of writing, others quite too plain and old fashioned; one was too proud, and did not suit because he was married; still another because he was not married. Now *we are very anxious* to settle a minister; but we are probably setting our standard quite too high.'"

"That is a pretty good description of our case," said the deacon. "Where do you say that place is, Mr. Harris?"

"G——," was the reply.

"O, yes," said the deacon; "I know where it is. I have been there."

"Well," said Mrs. Follet, "I think we have had quite too many candidates. I wish the people had done here

as they did in the place where my father lives. Dr. E. wished for a colleague, and the people were inclined to comply with his request. Before the time came, however, for him to quit preaching, he urged upon the people *the importance of not having many candidates.* It is not necessary, he said, to hear many; and besides, he said, there was much evil occasioned by so doing. The people become divided. A few become attached to one candidate and a few to another; and so one party, by and by, will not like the man popular with the other party, out of revenge. 'Now,' said he, 'my advice to you is, to inquire for some suitable young man to come here and preach. If one be recommended, let the committee make very particular examination of those who are well acquainted with him as to his talents, piety, acquisitions, discretion, &c. If after this examination they are satisfied that the young man would be a proper person, let the committee go and see him; and if from his appearance they infer that they have had a correct account of him, let them partly engage him to come and preach a few Sabbaths. I would not,' the doctor said, 'have him fully engaged until the committee had returned home and made known to the people the result of their interview, and ascertained if there was any *probability* of their being united in him. If the people then favor his coming and seem inclined to give him a call, if he makes good the representations which have been made of him, then I would have the young man sent for and employed to preach.'"

"That is very judicious and most excellent advice, I should think," Mr. Eldridge remarked. "I hope the people followed it."

"Yes, sir, they did; and they did not hear but one candidate. No one preached before Mr. Kingsbury; and the people, by being *prepared to like him*, were well satisfied with him, and gave him a call, which he accepted. The

committee made inquiries about quite a number of men and went to see several of them ; but they did not feel satisfied that any one of them would answer whom they could obtain but Mr. Kingsbury."

"I advised the committee here this afternoon," Mr. Eldridge said, "to pursue a course which might lead to a similar result. I advised them to suspend hearing candidates for the present, and to urge upon the church the importance of humbling themselves before God for their past sinfulness, and *especially* for not looking to him for a pastor. I told them, if they would do this in sincerity, I thought the time would not be distant before they would have sent unto them a pastor in whom all would be united."

"That is good advice," said the deacon ; "and I rather think it will have some effect."

CHAPTER XII.

MISS BEMIS.

"Do you think you will be able to visit Mrs. Clay, my dear, this afternoon?" inquired Mr. Eldridge of his wife.

"I have been making my arrangements to do so, husband. I think it will do to leave Mary in the care of Hannah, she is so comfortable. She is usually contented, I perceive, when Hannah is with her."

"I am pleased to hear you say this," Mr. Eldridge replied; "for I was fearful that you might not be inclined to go. I think it will be perfectly safe and proper to leave daughter with Hannah."

"Were I to consult my own feelings," said Mrs. Eldridge, "I should much prefer visiting Mrs. Clay at some other time; for you know I am not very partial to these large parties."

"There will not be many there, will there, wife?"

"O, yes, dear. Did I not tell you that Mrs. Clay remarked, when she called to invite us, that she was intending to ask *all* her acquaintance in town and some from other places?"

"You might have said so," Mr. Eldridge replied; "but I have hardly thought of the visit; for you know how entirely engrossed I have been of late with that translation. If Mrs. Clay is intending to have so many of her friends together I think we ought to go; for she would be much

disappointed if we were not there. Mrs. Davidson would like to have you ride with her."

"Yes, dear; she sent word over this morning that she would be happy to have me accompany her, but that she could not be ready before late in the afternoon."

* * * * * *

When Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. Eldridge arrived at Mrs. Clay's, they found a large collection of ladies both from their own town and other places. The company was much larger than they had anticipated; but, being generally old acquaintances, their presence was for their increased satisfaction. Mrs. Davidson was particularly happy in recognizing some of her friends whom she had not met for a considerable length of time. The evening brought an accession to the assemblage in the gentlemen who belonged to the different families with which the ladies were connected.

As is usual in such gatherings, large and small circles were seen, made up of individuals of similarity in tastes, or between whom existed strong friendship. For a while Mrs. Davidson was surrounded by several of her particular friends in animated conversation on different matters; and so happy were they, as an occasional loud laugh testified, that the attention of others was directed to them, with the remark that there must be something very amusing going on where they were. It turned out that the source of their interest was in the conversation of Mrs. Whately with Mrs. Davidson on scenes she had lately witnessed in a journey for the benefit of her health. This being the fact, and the others perceiving that Mrs. Davidson and Mrs. Whately had very much to say to each other, though by no means manifesting a disrelish for the society of those around them, one after another changed their locality, till the two friends were left entirely by themselves in one corner of the parlor. When thus alone, Mrs. Davidson remarked, —

"We seem to be left to ourselves, Mrs. Whately."

"So it appears," Mrs. Whately replied; "and I will now improve the opportunity of asking you who that lady is, sitting by the side of Mr. Eldridge, who has been conversing with him for so long a time."

"That is Miss Bemis," said Mrs. Davidson, "a member of our church."

"She seems to be rather partial to your minister, I should think," Mrs. Whately observed; "for I see she has been conversing with him pretty much ever since he came in."

"She has probably been giving him some *advice* or making some suggestions as to his duty," Mrs. Davidson said. "She appears to feel as if the care and oversight of the parish devolved upon her. She is quite a ministerial sort of a lady, and very fond of being noticed by the clergy."

"Is she a minister's daughter?" Mrs. Whately inquired.

"O, no," said Mrs. Davidson. "Her father was a farmer in moderate circumstances. He lived and died in this town. She formerly lived with Mr. Loring, who was settled here before Mr. Eldridge came, and was made considerable of in his family. She there saw much of ministers, and has since always manifested a large share of interest in their matters."

"Where does she now live?" Mrs. Whately asked.

"She has a room in Mr. Bently's house, near Mr. Dixon's store. She is rather poor, and takes in sewing, binds shoes, and can turn her hand to a variety of things."

"Is she not *over nice?* From her appearance I should think she was," said Mrs. Whately.

"What makes you think so?" said Mrs. Davidson, with a very expressive smile.

"O, I don't know; but she appears to me to be one of your very particular sort of persons."

"She has that character here in town," Mrs. Davidson

replied. "She thinks she is a sort of a standard. I rather suspect she feels competent to decide almost any point of propriety. At any rate, she *takes it upon herself* thus to decide."

"She is pretty free, then, to express her opinions, is she not?" said Mrs. Whately.

"She is not at all backward, I assure you," Mrs. Davidson said, "especially in matters pertaining to the minister or the church and parish. She exacts a great deal of the whole of us, minister and all. There is no such thing as any of us doing enough — we are always behindhand in some thing, not up to the mark in any thing. My husband can hardly endure her. She is very much given to making comparisons between the engagedness of Christians here and those elsewhere, and between Mr. Eldridge's preaching and his activity among the people and the preaching and conduct of other ministers. She is so very particular as to be seldom satisfied."

"She is a very engaged Christian herself, I suppose," said Mrs. Whately. "Her own mark is high, and she thinks others ought to have a similar standard."

Mrs. Davidson smiled and said, "If speaking of the failures of others, and being of constant annoyance to her pastor and others, by her improper interference with his concerns and those of his family, make an engaged Christian, Miss Bemis is surely such a one. We think she keeps her eye too much *abroad* and *not enough within*."

"I should think," said Mrs Whately, "that Mr. Eldridge would endeavor to show her the sin of such conduct, and persuade her to change her character in this respect."

"I rather think," said Mrs. Davidson, "Mr. Eldridge will not make the attempt. He has a very correct idea of her character."

"If she is given to censure," said Mrs. Whately, "and if her remarks lead to mischief, I really think your minis-

ter ought to attempt to make her sensible of her influence and induce her to amend."

"She is so very severe on ministers and on Mr. Eldridge and his wife that he is not inclined to enter into any very personal conversation with her. It would not do any good if he should."

"Ah," said Mrs. Whately, "does Miss Bemis allow herself to speak hard of Mr. Eldridge? I should think, from the manner in which she treats him this evening, that she was one of his warmest friends."

"I told you, you recollect," said Mrs. Davidson, "that she loves to be noticed by the clergy. She would be much flattered if they would notice her enough to follow her dictations. She prides herself so much on her knowledge of ministerial duties as qualifies her, in her own opinion, to give ministers important instructions."

"She is a sort of *ministerial supervisor*, I should think, from what you say," said Mrs. Whately, "and *church members' guide*."

"I never heard her called by such title," Mrs. Davidson replied. "If should be added, '*and advisor or guardian of the minister's wife*,' the title would be more complete, and would well apply to Miss Bemis. A minister and his family must walk on her line, or be reported in no very measured terms as extremely delinquent."

As this last remark was finished, Mrs. Durant, from another town, approached the two ladies and seated herself, saying she thought they ought not to engross so much of each other's society.

"We are very happy to have your company," said Mrs. Davidson; "for we are talking just now on a subject that has interested you, I believe."

"What is that?" inquired Mrs. Durant.

"You may remember," said Mrs. Davidson, "when my husband and myself spent an afternoon with you last

spring, your conversation with me about Miss Simons, of your parish."

"O, yes," said Mrs. Durant; "but you have not been talking about her this evening, have you?"

"We have not been talking about *her*," said Mrs. Davidson, "but we have about one *like her*."

"You have no such character over here, I hope," said Mrs. Durant, with great feeling.

"I rather think," Mrs. Davidson replied, "*your place* is not *peculiar* for having these ministerial supervisors, as Mrs. Whately calls them."

Mrs. Durant, laughing heartily at this apt denomination of character, remarked "that her friend was peculiarly fortunate in her title for such individuals. They are very troublesome, very mischievous, persons. They are so annoying to ministers and their wives, and so very meddlesome in what does not concern them, that I have no sort of patience with them. I really believe they occasion more uneasiness in parishes than almost any other cause of trouble, and are oftener the primary instruments in the dismission of ministers than is usually imagined."

"You are excited," Mrs. Whately remarked.

"I *know I am*," said Mrs. Durant. "As I said, I have no patience with these meddling sort of folks, who are eternally prying into a minister's affairs and constantly deserting him, and who are running hither and thither about the parish with the news they pick up in regard to the minister and his wife or children, making a mountain often out of nothing. I have seen so much evil brought about by these individuals that I hold them an intolerable nuisance. Has Mrs. Davidson been saying any thing to you, Mrs. Whately, of our Miss Simons."

"She has not. I have never heard of her before," Mrs. Whately replied.

"Well," continued Mrs. Durant, "she occasions a good

deal of commotion among us, I assure you. She might not be taken to be such a character on a slight acquaintance, being of a retiring habit and not very talkative; but then it is in her to do vast mischief in a parish. I have no doubt she is a pious woman, and is really anxious to have the cause of Christ prosper; but she is so contracted in her views as to be a very incompetent judge of many things pertaining to the conduct of ministers or of the members of the church; yet with a certain class she has great influence, and she excites them often to dangerous action. They hear Miss Simons's stories about the minister and some prominent members of the church, and forthwith report all over the parish; and in this way we have every now and then quite an explosion."

"How does Miss Simons collect her materials for stirring up such a strife?" Mrs. Whately inquired.

"O, she *visits* at our minister's considerably," Mrs. Durant replied, "and is abroad among the people very much. It puzzles me to account for her conduct when she is so retiring in her manners and not a very great talker. If she was a great talker I could well reconcile her conduct. When she visits the people treat her with much attention, but many of them are very careful not to give her any occasion to talk. She, however, *makes occasion.* A half hour in our parsonage often gives her material for accomplishing a great deal. Sometimes she finds the minister, when she calls at his house, looking, as she says, rather slovenly — by that we understand that he is not dressed for the pulpit or a wedding. So the report goes round that Mr. Plummer is a sloven. Sometimes she finds him holding the baby whilst his wife is in another room engaged in some necessary avocation: and then we hear that Mr. Plummer don't study — that his wife prevents him. Sometimes Mrs. Plummer and the children are the subjects of her remark for not being exactly in that trim in which

she thinks they ought to be; and then we hear that Mr. Plummer ought to be ashamed of himself for not providing his wife with help, so that she may keep herself and family looking decent. She don't consider that our people only give the minister but a little more than four hundred dollars a year, and that he finds it very difficult to get the necessaries of life. In this way you can easily see how much evil she may do. She thinks a minister ought never to say any thing only on the subject of religion, and ought always to be as solemn as if he were at a prayer meeting."

"It is not at all surprising, if Miss Simons has any influence, that she should occasion much trouble in a parish," Mrs. Whately observed.

"As I said," Mrs. Durant replied, "there are some who are disposed to think considerable of Miss Simons; and then, you know, nowadays people don't stop to consider. If they hear any thing about a minister or his wife that is to their disadvantage, *they are ready to believe it all true* and to herald it forth far and near. Last fall our minister, not having much for his horse to do, and being willing to avail himself of the earnings of the animal, let him to a friend to go on a journey. As it was something unusual for the minister to be without a horse, Miss Simons conjured up the idea that the horse and minister's chaise had been taken for debt. This intelligence was spread about as a *fact*, both in and out of the parish, to the discredit of the minister. He came to know of the report by his being called upon one day by one of his friends to inquire of him if he wished to purchase a horse. The minister was surprised at the question, and remarked that he had *one* horse, and a very good one too, and did not wish for another. 'Why,' said the friend, 'I thought you had no horse. I heard that you had been obliged to part with him. Miss Simons and some of her brothers have reported such a story, and I really thought it was a fact.

I supposed that you could not well do without a horse, and so I called to sell you mine.' The minister felt very much hurt by this species of intelligence; and, on inquiry, he traced it back to Miss Simons and her bachelor brothers. They did not know why the minister's horse was away; and being disposed to have a reason for all his conduct, if they are not in possession of the true one, they will *manufacture* one to suit them."

"These characters are really very vexatious and troublesome," said Mrs. Davidson.

"Yes, they are," replied Mrs. Durant. "Our minister has lately been dismissed, you know; and the trouble with him all arose from this meddlesome Miss Simons and her brothers. She was at the bottom of it. They would report stories of no better foundation than the one I just told you about the minister's horse; and these were spread and believed, and a prejudice excited which resulted in the conviction on the part of many that it would be better for the parish to have another minister."

"It is strange people will allow themselves to be influenced as they are in matters relating to a minister," Mrs. Davidson observed. "I cannot see why they should believe every thing said to a minister's disadvantage, as some are disposed to do. If all felt as I do, Miss Bemis and Miss Simons, and others like them, would have but small encouragement to pry into a minister's affairs and report the result of their officious meddling among the parish."

"I wish," said Mrs. Durant, "there were more like you, Mrs. Davidson, who can appreciate the peculiar situation of a pastor and his family, and who have candor and common sense to influence them in their judgment. If such were the case, there would be fewer difficulties in our parishes."

"I thank you, Mrs. Durant, for your good opinion,"

Mrs. Davidson said, "and I hope I may ever have the character you give me. I cannot endure these persons who are forever making trouble in parishes with the minister."

"I wish there was some way," said Mrs. Durant, "to prevent such characters as Miss Bemis from doing so much mischief."

"I wish so, too," said Mrs. Davidson, "with all my heart. The only way I think of is, *not to listen to them.*"

"But then, you know, there are always to be found those who are disposed to give an ear to the gossip of a Miss Bemis, to swallow all her perversions, and wonder with her at all the fancied inconsistencies of ministers and their wives, and ——"

The sentence was not finished; for Miss Bemis was seen approaching the circle, and was soon seated near Mrs. Davidson and her friends.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN OLD PARISH DEBT.

Mr. Eldridge had been out all the afternoon making pastoral calls, and returned home about the hour for tea in most excellent spirits, from the reflection upon the prosperous condition of the parish and the many expressions of strong attachment of his people to their pastor. After removing his boots, and putting on slippers, and exchanging his coat for his study gown, he seated himself near his wife, who was sewing by the window, and remarked, —

"How I wish that *old parish debt* was paid! If that was only out of the way, I should be comparatively happy."

"You can't bear debt, can you, husband?" his wife replied.

"No, I cannot; and especially when there is not the least cause for it."

"Why don't the people pay this debt?" Mrs. Eldridge inquired.

"There are many who are very anxious to have it paid, and I suppose all would feel better if it were settled; but, then, there is a difference in opinion as to the best way of paying it," Mr. Eldridge replied.

"I should think a part of the fund might be taken for this purpose," Mrs. Eldridge suggested.

"Some individuals wish to do this," Mr. Eldridge said; "but there are more who think it would be the wiser way

to have the debt paid by a tax. I have been thinking that I must bring up the subject in my next anniversary discourse, the time for preaching which is now near. It is eleven years since I have been here, and this debt has been the cause of no little vexation to many of the parish and of trouble to me. I have conversed privately with different individuals upon the importance of having this matter adjusted until I have become discouraged. I think, if I should lay myself out and preach a strong sermon upon the subject, something might be accomplished."

"I do not know about this," said his wife, thoughtfully. "It is a delicate subject, and perhaps some might take exceptions to your course, and the consequence might be a *difficulty* which might *end* in *your dismission*."

"Well, what if it should?" Mr. Eldridge replied, with energy. "I cannot help it. This debt is a hinderance to the prosperity of the parish; it has occasioned hard feeling at times among the people. It can be paid; all would be glad if it were paid; and it must be paid. I rather think it is my duty to preach on the subject."

In about a month from this period the anniversary discourse was *preached*, and was *heard*, too, by all the large assembly. Seldom had the pastor equalled this pulpit effort, and never, perhaps, were the people more disposed to remark on a sermon. On the afternoon next after its delivery Mr. Eldridge was out calling on his people, and was surprised to discover what a deep impression his sermon on the previous day had made. He was, moreover, highly gratified in hearing the importance of its subject so generally commended and in noticing how general was the disposition to attack at once the old parish debt and annihilate it. In passing from one house on his way to another he met Mr. Osgood, whose conversion in the early part of his ministry was alluded to in a previous chapter. Though somewhat bowed down with age, yet he

held on to his first love with enthusiastic ardor. Ever alive to what enters into the welfare of the church and success and happiness of the pastor, as soon as the common salutations were over Mr. Osgood remarked, —

"They say you preached a great discourse yesterday, Mr. Eldridge — *a great discourse.* I was glad to hear about it. I wish I had been to meeting; but I had to stay at home to let my wife go."

"I noticed you were not present," the pastor replied.

"One of us," continued Mr. Osgood, "must stay at home with our poor sick daughter, you know; and I staid yesterday; but I reckon I have heard about all you said. My wife told me a great deal; and then almost every one I have seen to-day has been talking about it. I rather guess they'll pay off the old debt now."

"I hope they will, most certainly," said the pastor. "It ought to have been paid years ago."

"Yes, yes; it ought," Mr. Osgood acquiesced; "but then, you know, the money was not wanted. The man who holds the note is satisfied to have the parish owe him, for he feels that his money is safe. Colonel Presbury likes to have his property secure, you know."

"I had rather our parish would not be in debt," Mr. Eldridge continued, "as there is not the least reason for it. If Colonel Presbury *don't* want his money, he can easily invest it elsewhere. I don't like to have any one with whom I am connected in debt, Mr. Osgood."

"I know," said the old gentleman, "you don't like debt, Mr. Eldridge, and the people know it too; and they are all glad that you keep out of debt. You were just the man to preach such a sermon as you did yesterday. I guess you'll make them pay the parish debt. If they do, they will all be glad of it; for they have been saying these twenty years or more that it ought to be paid."

Passing on, Mr. Eldridge next called on widow Rich-

ards, a very worthy member of his church, though in the humbler walks of life. She was a tenant of Col. Presbury, who lived in a large house near by. The pastor had not long been seated before the good lady began about the sermon of yesterday, and observed, —

"I was very glad to hear you preach about the parish debt, Mr. Eldridge. As long as the people are able to pay it off, I think they ought to do so."

"Certainly," said the pastor; "and I trust they will shortly do so."

"I rather think they will," Mrs. Richards replied. "Colonel Presbury told me this morning, when I was in to pay my quarter's rent, that he supposed the people would rally now and do something. The colonel was in favor of having it paid if the money was wanted; but he said that was not the case. He said he did not want the money, and that it would do no harm to let the thing remain as it now stands; but he said he supposed the people would pay it off."

"Did he say how he thought it ought to be paid?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"He said that, if the people concluded to pay it, he thought the best way would be to use part of the fund; but he said he was afraid they would resort to taxation. That he would not like, you know. His tax would amount to something."

"The colonel is able to pay a good tax," the pastor observed. "Where the Lord gives property, there ought to be a disposition to do what is right. I hope the colonel will be ready to come in with the wishes of the majority."

"But he won't, sir, if they make a tax. *He will never get over it.* I know him well, for I have lived by the side of him these forty years. He loves his money, sir, better than any thing besides."

Finishing his visit here, the pastor directed his steps

homeward. As he entered his house he heard busy conversation in the parlor ; and as he stood in the hall, laying aside his hat, &c., he overheard the remark from one, "I was truly rejoiced to hear him preach so yesterday." And thus the pastor was made to know that his sermon of the day previous was the theme of conversation. He had scarcely been seated before Mrs. McKay observed, —

"We have been talking about your '*debt sermon*,' Mr. Eldridge."

"Ah," said the pastor with a smile. "I have not heard that my sermon had been named."

"O, yes, it has," said Mrs. Morrison ; "I have heard a number of individuals to-day speak of Mr. Eldridge's debt sermon."

"Well, I hope none take exceptions to the discourse," the pastor said.

"No — no, sir ; it was a very popular discourse," Mrs. McKay remarked. "All liked it very much indeed. My husband thinks it will do good in more ways than one. He thinks it will not only be the means of paying the parish debt, but likewise of inducing sundry delinquent debtors about, who have almost exhausted the patience of their creditors, to consider of their obligations and at once '*square up.*'"

"Well," said Mrs. Cummings, a friend of Mrs. Morrison from another town, "if the sermon can have such an effect, I wish Mr. Eldridge might preach it to our people. We have some among us who need a little quickening upon the duty of paying their debts, particularly our deacon. He is very negligent in this respect, and has brought the office into great disrepute by not paying what he owes when it is in his power to do so. He can have every thing for himself and his children which is desired by either ; but when any of his creditors call they must be put off."

"That is a sad case," said Mr. Eldridge. "I should be

much tried if one of our deacons should have this character."

"Yes," said Mrs. Cummings; "I presume you would, Mr. Eldridge. Almost any minister, or, indeed, any individual, would be tried to have a deacon owe almost every body when he practised no self-denial. Our deacon can have the best carriage in the parish, and can dress his children in the height of fashion; but he cannot pay his debts. He did not act thus when his first wife was alive."

"Well," said Mr. Eldridge, "if my sermon of yesterday answers a double purpose, as you intimate, Mrs. McKay, it will accomplish more than I designed. I shall indeed be highly gratified if it will be instrumental in rousing the parish to pay off its debt; and if *delinquent debtors* are excited to do justly, *so much the better*."

"I wonder our people have suffered this debt to remain so long," said Mrs. Morrison. "It has been standing more than fifty years I am told."

"You know," said Mrs. McKay, "the people have often talked of paying it. No one has before taken up the matter in earnest, and commended the importance of having it cancelled, and got the public attention seriously turned towards the debt. I rather think now six months will not pass before the debt will be paid."

"I hope they will make a tax to liquidate this debt," said Mrs. Morrison, "and not disturb the fund."

"That would suit the greater part of the people best, I dare say," Mrs. McKay observed; "but some would be highly incensed should a tax be levied for this purpose."

"Not many," Mrs. Morrison replied. "We were speaking on the subject at dinner to-day, and my husband said he did not believe there would be more than four or five who would be strenuous for taking any portion of the fund to settle this debt."

"Did he say who the four or five individuals were?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"He mentioned Colonel Presbury, Mr. Benson, Mr. Otis," Mrs. Morrison said.

"These gentlemen have some influence," Mr. Eldridge observed, "and of course their feelings will be regarded."

"I don't believe they can prevent the majority doing as they please, however," said Mrs. Morrison, with much feeling. "I think there are a good many who would vote for a tax the sooner, if they thought Colonel Presbury and Mr. Benson were opposed to it."

"That would be wrong, would it not?" said the pastor.

"I suppose it would," Mrs. Morrison replied; "but human nature will out with itself, you know, sometimes."

"Yes," said the pastor; "and the exhibition is often very odious, you know. I really hope there are none among us who would vote for a tax merely to oppose the gentlemen who have been just named."

"Perhaps that would not be all the motive," said Mrs. Morrison. "I really hope, however, they will soon have a parish meeting and vote to pay off this old debt by a tax; for I think the prosperity of the parish would in this way be best promoted."

After their visitors had left, and as the pastor and his wife were alone, the latter remarked,—

"Your sermon yesterday will be remembered, I think, husband. There have been several ladies in this afternoon before those who have just gone came, who had a great deal to say about your preaching yesterday."

"Who have been in, my dear?"

"Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Barnes, Mrs. Thorndike, Miss Gill, Mrs. Lovell, and Miss Bemis."

"You have, indeed, been highly favored, I think. Did they all speak of the sermon?"

"I believe they all did but Mrs. Barnes. She was taken

up in telling me about her sister, who lately died, you know. All the other ladies had much to say about the parish debt and your sermon."

"What did Miss Bemis say about it?"

"She called with Mrs. Lovell. Mrs. Lovell was delighted that you took up the subject and was highly pleased with your manner of treating it. Miss Bemis said that she was, but that she thought it would have been *wiser* to have preached it on a *fast* or *thanksgiving occasion* rather than on the Sabbath."

"Of course," said Mr. Eldridge, dryly; "and if I had preached it on either of these days, it would have been *wiser* to have preached it at some other time; or, if not, to have not preached at all. Well, wife, it is my opinion that all the people heard my sermon yesterday, and, as you say, that it will not soon be forgotten. I never preached a sermon that I have heard so much about as I have of this. I met fifteen or twenty individuals whilst I was out this afternoon, and I believe every one of them had more or less to say about the parish debt and my sermon yesterday. I think all this talk will lead to some action, and that soon the old parish debt will live only in memory."

The ruling subject throughout the parish for several days continued to be the parish debt. The pastor was gratified to learn before the week was out that there would be a warrant up on the next Sabbath for a parish meeting, "to see whether the parish will take any action in relation to the parish debt." The meeting was accordingly held and most numerously attended by an interested company of voters and others. There seemed to be a general feeling that, all things considered, it would be for the interest of the parish if its debt was paid. When, however, the question came, How shall the debt be paid? there was more division of sentiment. Mr. Benson

advanced the policy of paying the debt from the fund. Colonel Presbury sympathized in feeling with Mr. Benson and waxed warm in a speech on the matter. Mr. Dixon, a merchant of the place, sided in very warmly with the colonel. Against this policy there was very strong opposition from a large number of individuals; and when the motion to pay the debt from the fund was put, it was decided in the negative by a very large majority. Mr. Clay then moved that the debt be paid with money raised by a tax; and after a long and very spirited debate the motion prevailed, there being not more than seven or eight out of some one hundred and fifty voters whose hands were raised in opposition.

In about two weeks from the period at which this parish meeting was held, some six or seven gentlemen called on the pastor. Squire Davidson, Mr. Morrison, Mr. Clay, and Deacon Smith were of the number. They proved to be a delegation from a large portion of Mr. Eldridge's parish to convey to him some expressions of gratitude for his agency in the matter of liquidating the parish debt. The squire was appointed to take the lead in the premises; and he acquitted himself, as few could have done, well and handsomely. In his address he touched upon many things in the history of the pastor which could not have failed to produce in the breast of that worthy man the most pleasurable emotions. In closing, the squire remarked, "For your interest in this important matter, reverend sir, your friends, which appear to be almost the entire people, have raised the sum of one hundred dollars, which I now have the happiness of tendering to you." As such a delegation for such a purpose had not, in any breeze nor by any tongue, been intimated to the pastor, he was taken by storm, and for a moment utterance failed him in his attempts to conquer the tempest of feeling which was raging within him. However, but a moment thus bound the

gratitude of his heart; for he soon spoke forth manly sentiments, grateful words, thanking heartily his people for their abiding interest in himself. He was particularly grateful for the evidence borne by the present interview with their delegation, of the unanimous satisfaction experienced in the parish at the extinguishment of the debt which had troubled him so much, and been no inconsiderable source of disquietude, at times, in the parish.

Whether the few opposed to the tax were aware of this expression of feeling in the many, none could then tell. That *one* of these few laid the tax heavily to heart, thinking of it by night and meditating on it by day, thus allowing it corroding power for years before its development to the world, may appear by and by.

CHAPTER XIV.

SQUIRE DAVIDSON A DELEGATE TO A COUNCIL.

"ARE you any acquainted with Mr. Hanly, father, or any of his people?" asked Frances of Squire Davidson.

"I believe I met him once, daughter, at a council somewhere; but I do not now remember where. I do not know as I am acquainted with any of his people."

"I thought such might be the case, as in the letter missive it was requested that you might be appointed delegate from our church to the council for his dismission."

"I presume some of the people or Mr. Hanly may know something of me, as I have been on a large number of councils, you know," the father continued. "I am afraid that I shall be under the necessity of going alone, as Mr. Eldridge will probably think it his duty to remain at home."

"What is the matter, husband, that Mr. Eldridge cannot go?"

"I saw him this morning," said the squire, "and he told me that he felt afraid his little Henry was going to be sick, and that, if he were no better in the morning, he should not go to the council."

"I am sorry to hear that he has more sickness in his family," Mrs. Davidson said. "I hope the dear little boy will not be sick."

Early the next morning Mr. Eldridge called on the

squire and informed him that the illness of his son had increased, and consequently that it would not be consistent for him to leave town.

"What need is there of your going, husband?" Mrs. Davidson inquired, after Mr. Eldridge had left. "As the distance is great and the people are strangers to you, I would not go. I don't see why they sent so far for a council. It is upwards of fifty miles from here, is it not?"

"Yes, dear," the husband replied; "it is upwards of sixty, I believe. As Mr. Hanly and his church have sent to our church, and as I have been chosen a delegate, I feel that I ought to go; and I must start this afternoon, too, by one o'clock, or I shall not be there to-morrow in season."

The squire accordingly set off; and the next day, after a long ride in his own carriage, he found himself with others in council for the dismission of Mr. Hanly. This ecclesiastical body he soon discovered was composed of pastors and delegates of no ordinary discernment, wisdom, and piety; and the squire felt himself happy in the reflection on their capacity to act as valuable advisers in the case now before them.

It appeared from the documents submitted that Mr. Hanly had been settled about six years, and had been singularly blessed in his labors for the conversion of the impenitent and for the general welfare of his people. His efforts for the younger portion of his flock had been blessed to the advancement of this important part of his charge in every thing which tended to their increased promise and worth. It appeared, likewise, that Mr. Hanly had a young and rising family about him, and that he was not apprised of there being any necessity for his seeking another parish until about three months anterior to the session of this council. Indeed, he almost felt assured, from the many expressions, not only from leading

individuals in his society, but from all classes therein, which had been repeated almost every month, that he occupied a deep place in the confidence and affections of his people, and that it would be no easy task to create animosity and alienation towards him. Being a young man and enthusiastic in his love for his chosen profession, he was not looking for any interruption to his usefulness, whilst he was increasing in his efforts and power to render unto his people more and more service. He so read that word of eternal truth — the unfolding of which to his fellow-men was the great object of his life — as to draw therefrom the inference, at no infrequent intervals and in no measured strength, that, if he was true to his God and to the entire people of his charge, he had reasonable ground for the expectation that his people would be true to him. It was, accordingly, his constant endeavor to be thus true; nor did any evidence in the slightest form appear in all that was said by the people before the council that their pastor had deviated from the general line of true ministerial fidelity. It became, therefore, rather a difficult enigma for the council to solve how the usefulness of the pastor was over with the people of his charge when it was universally admitted that he had labored faithfully, both in and out of the pulpit, during the entire period of his ministry, and that he was generally respected and beloved throughout the society. In the solution of this enigma the pastor and a few others could at once have rendered important aid; but, inasmuch as the council had been called to consider all matters superinducing the necessity of the pastor's dismission, he and others deemed it proper for a time to stand in the rear, to allow the individuals who had been prominent in the creation of this necessity to make out their case and illustrate their general reason that Mr. Hanly had lost his usefulness. At almost every step made by the opposition to

the pastor it was evident that they were embarrassed with the lameness of their cause; and not unfrequently was there a strange irritation about the bronchial region at some question from one member of the council and another, which for a moment so choked the utterance of the respondents as to make it rather difficult for them to proceed. However, after three or four hours had been consumed in making out their case, the committee announced to the council that they had nothing more to offer. As the hour was near at which the council had voted to adjourn for tea, it was voted that the pastor and his friends defer their statements to the evening session.

At the evening session the pastor addressed the council in a few sentences, which breathed so much self-possession, candor, reliance on rectitude of motive, a clear conscience, and of general trust in God and in the impartial trust in the judgment of the wise and good, that they made most happy impressions on all who were present. He closed by saying that he would proceed to call a few witnesses, from whose testimony he had no doubt the council would soon discover — if he had lost his influence, and consequently his usefulness among the people of his charge — in what way this disastrous result had been accomplished. He accordingly first called the name of a very prominent member of the parish, who had influence over many by his extensive wealth, and asked him if he would have the goodness to come forward. This was a course which had not been anticipated. As the gentleman thus summoned had been taken by surprise, he was not very prompt in his movements towards the table of the scribe, where he was requested by the moderator to appear. However, at last he made his way through the crowd and stood at the table, by the side of which Mr. Hanly had his seat. The pastor then said, —

"I would ask you, Mr. Wilcox, when opposition to the pastor, to your knowledge, was first manifested?"

"I never heard of any opposition to speak of until last December," was the reply.

"If there had been any before that period you would probably have known it, would you not, sir?"

"I think I should," was the answer.

"Is it your opinion that the usefulness of the pastor in this church and society is at an end?"

"I have thought so for some time past; yes, sir."

"What has the pastor done to destroy his usefulness?"

"He'm — he'm; well, I don't know as I can exactly say."

"If the pastor has lost his influence, Mr. Wilcox, he must have done this by some act or acts. Either he has committed some offence or omitted some important duties. Now, I would like to have you state to the council if the pastor has been negligent of any ministerial duty, or been guilty of any conduct which ought to have destroyed his usefulness."

The gentleman hesitating and changing his position, evidently betraying an inability to answer, Mr. Hanly varied his question by asking, —

"Has it been supposed that the pastor, within the last ten months or previously, has neglected his studies, or neglected his people, or been guilty of any species of improper conduct?"

"I have never heard any thing said that has led me to suppose that the pastor was negligent of his studies or that he did not take proper care of his people. No one, to my knowledge, has ever said that you have committed any crime."

"Well, Mr. Wilcox, I will ask you one other question. If the pastor had been in Europe throughout the last November, do you think there would have been any complaint that his usefulness was lost?"

"I do not know as he lost his influence in the month of November last."

"Well, sir, did your pastor vote for governor and for president last November?"

"He'm — he'm," with a sudden reddening of the face. Mr. Wilcox finally remarked, "I believe that he did, sir. It is generally supposed that he did."

"Well, sir, have you heard that any of our people were dissatisfied with the manner of his voting?"

"I have heard something of the kind, sir."

"There was considerable political excitement in this town, was there not, sir?"

"There was."

"Did you ever know of the pastor's taking any active part in political matters, or that he was disposed to make the subject a matter of conversation when visiting the people?"

"I never heard much said about the matter."

"Have you heard any of the party with whom the pastor was supposed to vote complain of him for voting?"

"Not that I know of."

"Did the pastor vote the same ticket with yourself?"

"I suppose he did not."

"Have you heard any thing said by *your party* about the pastor's voting?"

"Yes, sir; I have."

"Have you heard more from your party than from any other?"

"I suppose that I have, sir."

The moderator inquired if the pastor voted with the party that was the *largest* in his parish.

"He is supposed," Mr. Wilcox replied, "to have voted with the party which is the largest in the *town*, but not in *our parish*, sir."

A member of the council inquired, —

"Had the pastor voted with the party which was the

largest in his own society, would there, in your opinion, have been the opposition to him which now exists?"

The gentleman not answering at once, the member proposing the interrogatory remarked that he would not press the question. Whereupon Mr. Hanly said he had no further questions to ask Mr. Wilcox; and the witness retired.

Mr. Hanly next called on Mr. Goodwin, who, appearing at the stand, was asked, —

"Will you please to state to the council, Mr. Goodwin, your views of the present state of feeling in our church and parish in relation to the pastor?"

"I don't know as I have any thing in particular to offer," the gentleman remarked. "There appears to be considerable bad feeling at the present time. Many think it is time to have another minister."

"How long has the dissatisfaction of which you speak been manifest?"

"I never heard of any alienation towards the pastor till within a few months. The people until lately all thought a great deal of the minister; but, somehow or other, there does not appear so much interest in him now as formerly."

"Have you heard any charges brought against the pastor for neglect of duty or improper conduct?"

"I do not remember to have heard of any such."

"Do you think that the present difficulties with the pastor are in any way connected with the exercise of his political rights?"

"Well, sir, to be frank, I am free to say, if you had voted last fall a certain ticket, those who are now opposed to you would not have acted as they have."

"I have no further questions," Mr. Hanly observed.

As Mr. Goodwin was retiring, a member of the council inquired, —

"Did the pastor vote as you voted, Mr. Goodwin?"

"He did not, sir, I believe. I wish that he had. I think it would have been vastly better for him if he had voted *right*."

Squire Davidson inquired,—

"Who has decided that the pastor voted wrong?"

Mr. Goodwin smiled, and retired in the midst of a gentle laugh of the council and of all the spectators.

The testimony of many other individuals was given, and was much in accordance with the foregoing evidence. It came out, however, from one of the witnesses, that, in contracting a second marriage, the *pastor had not paid sufficient deference to the suggestions of Mr. Wilcox's family*, whose desires had been excited that a *niece* of theirs might be the wife of their pastor. There was no testimony introduced which in any form reflected on the character of Mr. Hanly. He was shown to be a faithful, studious, laborious, efficient, consistent, and successful minister. Incidentally, as well as directly, it appeared that no clergyman among the many with whom Mr. Hanly exchanged was as acceptable to the people as himself, and that before that "*fatal vote*," and perhaps that "unfortunate election" of a wife, in utter disregard of the wishes of those who arrogated to themselves the dictatorship over their minister, he had a firm place in the affections of all. Nor could any mistake, from the entire disclosures which were made, what was the true and real ground for the termination of the pastor's usefulness among his people. This loss of influence was *not* owing to the warm opposition of the *entire* political party in Mr. Hanly's society with which he was not in sympathy. The real cause appeared to be, that there were a few in the party who thought no consideration second to that of their own kind of politics, and whose care for its success was their religion; whose zeal for this success was so great as to make them ready

to annihilate all opposition, even if the destruction of private character, or happiness, or prosperity were the consequence of their conduct. Mr. Wilcox was a rich man, a man of many farms, of many manufacturing works, *and there were many under him.* He could say to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh; to another, Vote, and he voteth. The society of which Mr. Hanly was pastor had grown up under the auspices of the Wilcox family till it became an independent body and able to provide for its own interests. Whilst many were for doing this, and thus retain their pastor, others of the same political party with Mr. Wilcox, though not condemning the minister for voting as it seemed to him good, — a prerogative which they claimed for themselves, and which they were willing every freeman should enjoy, — yet thought *it might be best, for the sake of peace* in the parish, that he should leave. It appeared that all the opposition to the pastor began with one or two individuals, as before stated, and that they had variously labored to increase dissatisfaction and provoke to their way of thinking, until at last, from prudential and politic considerations on the part of some, themselves willing that Mr. Hanly be retained, a state of feeling existed which would oppose the pastor's usefulness and happiness. This was the view taken by the council of the whole matter in their secret session for deliberation and result. This they formally declared on the morning of the second day of their sitting. From the feeling which had been developed, it was their opinion that the pastor could no longer be useful unless there was a change in this feeling. Taking it for granted that there would be no change, they advised the dismission of Mr. Hanly. In doing this, the council said all in his praise which a pastor in his situation could desire. They likewise admonished the people kindly but faithfully. The great sin of destroying a pastor's usefulness, when he

had in an eminent degree demonstrated his fitness for the station to which they had called him, merely for exercising his immunities as a man and a citizen, was set forth in no very measured terms. The rights of a pastor — his civil, political, social, and religious rights — were well defined and ably defended. The assumption of any to a dictatorship over him was severely condemned. "No people," said the council in their result, — "no people nor individuals in a parish ought ever to question, or do any thing to embarrass, a pastor in the exercise of all the rights which belong to him as a man and as a member of the community. His political and social rights are no more to be controlled by his people than are theirs to be by him."

In shaping this result, and in the rebukes which were faithfully administered to the few who had labored in all ways to effect the removal of Mr. Hanly, perhaps no individual had more influence than Squire Davidson. To his large and comprehensive mind, his generous and expansive heart, every act of a people towards their pastor which tended in the least to impair his personal rights or diminish his happiness would have no other appearance but that of evil. Consequently, every utterance from him would be condemnatory, and every expression a severe though deserved rebuke. "A minister is a man," he would often say; "let him live as a man, be treated as a man, enjoy as a man, with every help from his people to smooth his path; for, after all, his situation has so much that is trying about it he can enjoy but little this side of heaven."

CHAPTER XV.

AN INCIDENT AT AN ASSOCIATION.

Every clergyman in New England, and, indeed, throughout our country, is in connection with some association which has for its object ministerial progress. To such an association Mr. Eldridge was attached. Whilst its meetings are for the general improvement of the mind and heart, and for opportunities in which counsel can be obtained by its members either on matters of a parochial or of a personal character, yet the study of the Greek and Hebrew, the critical reading of sermons or literary or theological dissertations, does not occupy the minds of those present from the opening to the adjournment of the association, or presbytery. Having in general the same object in life, there is sympathy in its members one with another; and when, therefore, they come together, as they do at infrequent intervals, it is to be supposed that there will be some expressions other than what are strictly literary or theological. It would be strange if the opportunity were not improved for general relaxation and the diversion of the mind from its severer exercises in the performance of the arduous and often perplexing and trying duties of the pastorship. The recess had for dinner or tea is very often the opportunity which is improved for this purpose.

As a few members of the association with which Mr.

Eldridge was connected were standing, after dinner, under a large elm tree that spread its many branches over his house, a remark was made, in a somewhat loud utterance, that arrested the attention of another circle which stood near the door. So one of this latter circle, to satisfy the curiosity which was awakened, not only in his own mind, but in the minds of others about him, observed to the brother under the tree who made the remark, —

"What is that, brother Martin, you just said?"

"O," said brother Martin, "we have been discussing here since dinner the subject of pastoral security; and I remarked that I did not believe there was a pastor in the commonwealth who was at ease on his saddle."

"That is rather a random shot, is it not?" inquired the brother for whose gratification the remark was repeated.

"Of course it is," Mr. Martin replied; "I intended it as such — to hit every way."

"Well, I cannot agree with you," said Mr. Ellis, the brother before alluded to.

By this time pretty much all the brethren had been attracted towards the tree and were together under its shade. Said brother Martin, —

"I perceive we have about all the members of the association here; and I move the question be put to each one as to his own views and feelings of the permanency of his relation to his people. I think the response would be a very fair illustration and representation of the position of all the pastors in the state."

Without waiting for the formality of a vote upon his motion, Mr. Martin at once asked the brother nearest him for his expression.

"I don't know about this," brother Parker said; "but I very often tell my wife, when I plant my garden in the spring, that I do not know who will have the fruits thereof in the autumn. There is nothing now very alarming

among my people; but as for feeling secure for even a year, that is altogether out of the question. I have felt that I might be dismissed almost any time."

"Brother Taylor, how is it with you?"

"As yet I have not had any great fears about going," Mr. Taylor said. "You all know that our people have run largely into debt in building their meeting house. They think they have quite a burden to carry, and don't trouble themselves about me much. Besides, my people feel that I am a business sort of a man, and are relying on me to financier for them and help them. If they were not embarrassed and were going on smoothly, I should feel that I might find myself *suddenly* so situated as to make it for my comfort to seek another parish."

"Well, father Stowe, will you have the goodness to favor us with your experience in relation to this matter?"

"As I have now weathered it for upwards of thirty years among my present people, I do not know as I have any very particular fears of being dismissed. My people would be rather mortified to turn me off in my old age after I have endured the battle so long. I presume, however, many of them would have *no objection if I was in heaven*. If I had not been with them for such a length of time, I have no doubt there would have been a movement within a few years past in relation to another pastor. I hear now occasionally that some of the young folks are talking about a colleague for me."

"Brother Sandford, how is it with you?"

"If I had not been blessed with the means of living *without* my people, I should have been routed two or three times within the last ten years. I almost know that I should not have been where I am at present if I had been dependent on my people. They know I can live without them; and I suppose they are rather proud of the fact. If the salary now is not promptly paid, *they are not much troubled*

by the delinquency. If I were poor, they would be under the necessity of being punctual."

"Brother Haven, what can we hear from you?"

"I feel pretty much with brother Parker, that, when I set out a tree in my garden, I am by no means sure that, if I live, I shall see its first blossom. I am fully of the opinion that there are but few, if any, who are at ease on their saddle, as the brother said."

In this manner was each member of the association questioned; and it appeared that there was not an individual member who felt that he had any hold of his people which would survive the resolute effort of a few to put asunder the pastoral relation. All confessed to a continued anxiety as to a rupture; and, on the whole, it was very generally conceded that the brother whose remark at the onset was deemed by some as too broad had only related *a truth*, which the experience of the brethren fully confirmed.

"This is really a melancholy state of things," Mr. Parker observed, "for the pastors of our churches to be thus disturbed with anxiety as to the permanency of their continuance among their people."

"It is truly," acquiesced Mr. Martin, "a very great evil, not only to pastors, but likewise to churches. I have no doubt this conscious insecurity of pastors subtracts from their usefulness at least twenty per cent. They are now on the watch, and are sensitive to every passing breeze, not knowing but a storm may be gathering. Considerable time is consumed in watching events and in calculating probabilities; and with some pastors there is that feverish excitement which greatly impairs efficient action."

"This may be all true of some of our brethren who are very nervous and sensitive," said Mr. Selden; "but I rather think there are some who do not spend much time in borrowing trouble."

"I think," continued brother Martin, "that Mr. Selden

is not exactly a competent judge in the present matter. Very few men have your *nerve*, brother Selden ; very few can stand up as you can in times of trouble. You have just now stated that every one or two years there was quite a stir among your people in relation to your removal, and that you would have been dismissed long since had not your people been *afraid* of you. Now, supposing I had been in your situation : don't you think I should have been so much oppressed with what I might have heard as would have essentially hindered my usefulness ?"

"It is not best to be chicken hearted," Mr. Selden replied.

"But I cannot think it is chicken heartedness," said brother Sandford. "This anxiety is almost inseparable from humanity. I agree with brother Martin, that you are not a proper judge in the premises. Very few men have your nerve."

"I would like to inquire of brother Selden," said Mr. Eldridge, "if the excitement among his people from time to time in relation to his removal has not occupied much of his time, if it has not depressed his spirits ?"

"O, yes," said brother Selden ; "it has cost me many hours, I dare say, to think over matters and to prepare to meet events."

"If your thoughts had not been engrossed with preparation to meet the obstacles to your ministry which accumulated under the operation of the uneasiness of some of your people, you would have been occupied in doing something directly for their benefit, would you not ?" Mr. Martin inquired.

"Very likely, brother."

"Your own admissions," said Mr. Eldridge, "prove that the disposition on the part of your people to disturb for trifling causes is very hurtful both to the pastor and to them. I suppose all the trouble in your parish has been

from *fanciful* rather than from real causes. No charges are brought against you to affect your character in the least, either as a preacher, pastor, or a man. From what I am able to gather, your people acknowledge that there is no preacher in the association who is superior to you, and that the attempts made to displace you have proceeded from a few, who hardly know what kind of a minister would please them. These wish for frequent changes merely to gratify a sort of capricious feeling. Though *you* have not been cast down when these individuals have been agitating, there are not many, if there be *any*, of us who would have stood up. We should have felt our usefulness to be at an end in such a fire and racket."

"It is very strange," father Stowe remarked, "that our churches and parishes do not realize the vast injury they are doing themselves when exercised with this restless spirit of which we have been speaking. Take brother Selden's case for illustration. He has been settled about twelve years; and for some time past, as often, I should think, as every other year, I have heard of trouble there. The great body of his people have been satisfied with him, and are now, I presume; but how much injury indirectly have they received when in these fomenting states! They could not listen to preaching with any profit, for their minds were disquieted. Nor could they maintain that spirit of earnest prayer for the revival of God's work among them which is indispensable to a successful ministry of the word. If our churches would feel that the pastor they have is God's servant and gift, and that they are under the highest obligations to derive the greatest good from his ministry, — if they would not suffer themselves to think that there was a possibility of his being taken away from them except by death, — I think there would be both *better preachers* and *better Christians* than there are now. In a great many parishes nowadays the people are pretty much

all the time either hearing candidates, or settling a minister, or quarrelling one away. Now, what effect has the word preached among such a people ? "

"Brethren," said Mr. Ayers, "I think we ministers must take some of the responsibility for this restless spirit being in our churches ; for some of us, at least, encourage it. There are, you know, ministerial lawyers whom these restless spirits in our churches consult, and by whom they are often *indirectly*, and many times directly, aided in their attempts at disorganization. It is pleasant to poor human nature to be flattered and be had in high estimation for our wisdom ; but I do not think it right for a minister, for a pastor, to take up against his brother pastor, and be a sort of semi-lawyer for these people in our churches who are forever making difficulty."

Here the colloquy was interrupted by the arrival of the hour for the afternoon session of the association.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN EVENING IN BOSTON.

In the prosecution of his mercantile pursuits in the country, it was necessary that Squire Davidson should frequently visit the city. At the period of one of these visits the legislature was in session ; and as Mr. Adams, the representative from his town, was one of his particular friends and a member of the same church with himself, he availed himself of his earliest leisure to call at the State House and seek an interview with his friend. The squire was not designing any protracted stop in the lobby, but only to acquaint his friend with the fact of his being in the city, with the expectation of calling upon him again at his hotel. After a brief interview, made briefer than was anticipated by the fact that the house was about passing to be engrossed a bill which had long been before the body and which had awakened strong feeling and elicited lengthy debate, the squire took his leave, accepting, however, an invitation from the representative to call upon him again at the Bromfield House.

There being several members of the legislature in whose acquaintance Mr. Adams had found great pleasure, he invited them likewise ; for he felt assured that their acquaintance with the squire would on every account be an increased source of their pleasure as well as a great gratification to

him. When, therefore, the company were together in the evening, it was found that eleven individuals, representing different portions of the state and various professions, were happy in each other's society. For a while their conversation was on general subjects; and it was somewhat remarkable that most of the gentlemen discovered a similarity of tastes and feelings, which contributed to enhance in no small degree their enjoyment. At length one of the gentlemen inquired of Mr. Adams who he thought would be chosen election preacher, as the morrow was the period assigned for the choice. This question brought up the subject of ministers; and as the company were chiefly professors of religion, they soon evinced their interest in this important class of the community. No subject more interested the squire, as his sympathies had for a long period, and in a remarkable manner, been with the men who were so conspicuous to every eye and so often the subject of remark from almost every tongue. All noticed his eager interest, and all were delighted with the zeal in which he expressed himself in relation to the men whose position was so peculiar and trying. At length Mr. Davis, of Boston, observed, —

"I wonder sometimes how any young man dare enter the ministry."

"How so?" inquired Mr. Adams.

"The situation of a clergyman is so uncertain, perplexing, and trying as to present but few inducements to become a minister," Mr. Davis replied.

"Ah, well," said the squire, "the reward is to come. A faithful minister will have no low place in heaven nor small enjoyment there."

"That is about all the inducement that I can see," said Mr. Davis, "to dispose any man to be a minister. There is much in this consideration, I acknowledge. The reflec-

tion must be pleasant, that, by entering the ministry and continuing faithful therein, an individual will be the instrument in saving souls and preparing them for heaven."

"That is the greatest motive," said Mr. Adams, "to the young man who makes choice of the clerical profession."

"A man must have strong faith and but little care for the things of this world," Mr. Davis observed, "who decides to become a minister."

"It is high time, I think," remarked Mr. Talbot, "that a different feeling prevailed in the community in relation to the ministry. It seems to me, when I see and hear how ministers are treated, that there is but little humanity in the consideration of them. Often when they are taxing all their physical and intellectual power for the advantage of the people, and when they are really accomplishing vast benefits for them, not only for time but for eternity, how sadly are they traduced and how suddenly their usefulness arrested! This is done, too, without the show of reason, and only to gratify pride, or caprice, or some more criminal feeling. The effects of such conduct on the happiness of the pastor and family are at times painful in the extreme."

"That is all true," replied Mr. Davis; "and it was because a minister is so very insecure in his relations to his people that I remarked just now as I did, wondering how any young man could consent to become a minister. A clergyman can make no calculation ahead. He has no foundation for hope, if he be faithful in the discharge of his duties to his people, that they will cherish him in their affections and sustain him in their service. Any trifling cause may set him afloat."

"From your expressions, Mr. Davis, I should judge," said the squire, "that you were familiar with the vicissitudes of the pastoral office in our country towns. I have supposed that your city ministers were regarded with

much more consideration than the clergy are in the country by their people. Instances of the dismission of pastors in the city are not very common, I believe."

"We intend, of course," Mr. Davis replied, "to be reasonable and just towards our ministers, but perhaps fail in this respect as often as you do in the country. Perhaps there is something in the circumstances of a city population which tends to the greater permanency of the pastoral relation over that which exists in the country."

"I do not know," the squire observed, "as I understand wherein the circumstances of the city people differ from those of the country in this respect."

"We have, you know, a variety of churches with us; and if any individuals become dissatisfied with their pastor, it is a very easy thing for them to leave and go to another church."

"There is something in this consideration," said the squire. "It never occurred to me before. I can understand now how a pastor in the city may remain settled in the same church for years."

"Our population," continued Mr. Davis, "is made up to a large extent of those who formerly lived in the country and have not that strength of attachment to locality which exists with you. In the country people think much of their *church*. All their early and strong associations are with it. There worshipped their fathers — there they were wont to go from early childhood to maturer years — there they have formed and strengthened their strongest friendships. A thousand considerations bind the people in the country to their own sanctuary and make them indisposed to leave them for another, were such an alternative practicable, which you know is not often the case. If a parishioner in the country becomes dissatisfied with his pastor, he must either absent himself from church and remain at home, or ride every Sabbath much of a distance

to another town for worship, or make an effort to effect the removal of his pastor. This latter course is most usually pursued; and it is for this reason, I apprehend, that dismissions in the country are more frequent than in the city. When we are dissatisfied, it is the easiest thing to change our place of worship for the enjoyment of a more welcome minister."

"Your people in the city," said the squire, "virtually change ministers very often."

"Exactly so," said Mr. Davis. "Some congregations so change in course of a few years that very few of the people who were prominent in the settlement of the pastor are to be found in them. Some move out of the city, some go to other churches, sometimes because they are better pleased with another clergyman than their own, and at other times because in changing their place of residence they are remotely situated from the sanctuary where they have been accustomed to worship. I have no doubt there are pastors here who will say that their congregations have changed almost entirely within the last six or eight years. I know of some individuals who have belonged to two or three churches within this period."

"There might be added another reason," Mr. Allen suggested, "why the pastoral relation is less frequently sundered in the city than it is in the country; and that is, city ministers are less watched. In the country, you know, a clergyman cannot move without half a dozen or more are observing him. His whole daily conduct as well as that of his family is liable to be known and remarked upon all over the parish."

"A clergyman should do nothing," Mr. Marvin said, "which should be to his disadvantage were it made public."

"You know, sir," the squire quickly remarked, "people sometimes but *partly* see, and then speak of a thing as if

it had been fully observed. I know there are many people who are much disposed to talk about ministers, and these gather materials for their gossip from their observations of them as they go out and come in. They often manufacture a large story out of a circumstance which was but partly seen by them. They *thought* they saw what they reported; but from an examination into the facts, which became necessary from the commotion which had been excited, it appeared that the individual who started the story but *imperfectly* saw, and his imagination supplied the place of perfect vision."

"That is it," Mr. Allen observed. "In the country the tongue must go as well as in the city; but the causes to excite its motion are less variable in the former. So the people must make the best use of the materials for gossip which they have. The minister is a prominent man; he is public property; and so he is made, unfortunate man, the subject of daily and common remark. Mrs. A——, a near neighbor, sees him ride away from home in the morning. Soon Mrs. B—— calls on Mrs. A—— and presently asks where the minister is gone, for she saw him ride by their house. 'O,' says Mrs. A——, 'I don't know where he goes; he seems to be going somewhere all the time.' In this way the mill often starts in the country, and before the gate is shut quite a grist is ground. Now, the changing scenes of the city continually give rise to varied subjects of engrossing thought and remark, and the minister thus escapes. Besides, people in the city are full of business and have no time to watch their neighbors; and, if they had this time, there are too many of them, so that the minister would of necessity be passed by to a great extent."

"I trust," said the squire, "our friend Allen does not charge to the ladies the entire responsibility of the mischief done to our country ministers by the tongue."

"Far from it," Mr. Allen replied. "I am not one who supposes that gentlemen cannot and do not indulge themselves in watching the movements of ministers and in reporting the result of their observations. I have seen too many a Paul Pry in my day, who have directed their scrutinizing glance at their minister so effectually as to imagine they were perfectly acquainted with his ways, not to believe that the gentlemen are as much, if not more, in fault than the ladies. I think they hoist the gate quite as frequently as the ladies."

"You have sufficiently acquitted yourself of the charge, Mr. Allen," the squire replied. "Were there any ladies present, I presume they would be satisfied."

"I should hope so," said Mr. Allen; "for I should be very unwilling to make them exclusively responsible for the indulgence of that idle curiosity over a minister and his affairs from which so many evils have originated in our country parishes and have fallen so disastrously on ministers."

"I have no doubt," Mr. Talbot observed, "that the cause assigned by Mr. Allen for the greater permanency of the pastoral relation in the city than in the country is true. My own observation confirms me in this opinion. People must talk, and consequently they must have something to talk about; and the minister is about as fruitful a subject as can be found in the country. I regret that it is so; but we must admit the fact, there is a *disposition* to talk about a pastor to his discredit. I will not affirm that all who say improper things about him always design to do him any injury; but, then, what is thus spoken seldom fails to produce this effect. A minister in the country is pretty narrowly watched; for he is a very prominent man there. In the city this is not so much the case. There are individuals here, and a large number of them too, as prominent as the minister, and perhaps more

so. The city minister, therefore, is not alone viewed from an eminence. Were I a country minister, I should wish to live remote from neighbors. I would have a house, if I could by any means obtain one, in a secluded spot, so that it would not be known what was going on about my premises. Lately I visited a relative of my wife, who is a clergyman. I found him in an unhappy condition. There was trouble in his parish. To my inquiry, 'What occasioned this trouble?' he took me to his window and asked me to look up to a house opposite to his own, on a rising eminence, from which his premises are easily seen, and, directing my eye to a particular window, remarked, 'There! that window has made all this disturbance.' I learned that neither the pastor, nor any of his family, nor a stranger could go in or come out, nor a carriage be driven up to his door, without there being generally at '*that window*' one or more individuals to watch. And what they actually saw and what they *thought* they witnessed was sure to be a subject of remark all over the parish within four and twenty hours; for they who lived in that house were very fond of telling the news, and gossip was their chief delight. Now, these people had reported things which they fancied they saw in relation to the minister, and others had added a little, till there was considerable of a fire kindled in the parish. I advised my friend to sell his place and move into the woods, or else into the city, where he could escape such searching eyes and those prattling tongues."

"I most fully believe that all this is true," said Squire Davidson. "A man's neighbors in the country often do him great harm, and a minister is oftentimes more harmed in this manner than other people. I have always deemed it of the first importance that our pastor should have a house in a neighborhood of consistent and reasonable people; for I have felt that if he should have a certain

class of neighbors his usefulness, his happiness, and his respectability might be very materially affected and injured. I have known of great difficulties in parishes which have resulted in the dismission of their pastors, being commenced by the unwise, uncharitable, and unreasonable course pursued by the minister's neighbors. Without being aware, often, of the mischief their remarks are fitted to produce, they indulge themselves in idle gossip, of which people in other parts of the parish take hold, and thus persons evil disposed towards a pastor are furnished with materials for doing him great harm. The same result would be effected towards any other individual than the minister, provided this individual were an object of equal interest to people in general. I think the neighbors of a minister, would they consult his peace and the good of the parish, ought at times to be blind, or, if not blind, be dumb. There is no manner of use of telling all that we see and know, even if the matter of our observations and knowledge be entirely of an innocent character."

A servant now entering with refreshments changed the subject of remark.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BROTHER'S TROUBLE.

An agent of the American Board, having passed a Sabbath with Mr. Eldridge and presented to his people the pressing claims of the heathen, improved the Monday following in calling among the families for the purpose of receiving subscriptions in aid of his important enterprise. As he was about entering the door of the parsonage on his return to dinner he saw Mr. Eldridge advancing from the road towards the house; and, waiting on the steps, the two entered the dwelling together.

"I have just been to the post office," Mr. Eldridge observed, as they were seated, "and have been pretty well recompensed for my trouble. I have received these five letters and seven pamphlets. With your permission, brother, I will read the letters, and you can be looking at the pamphlets."

For about fifteen minutes both were thus engaged, and then silence was broken as Mr. Eldridge folded his last letter by his observing, —

"It is really shameful that some parishioners have so little consideration for their pastor's usefulness and comfort as well as for their own improvement. Here is a letter from brother Elton informing me that he shall be under the necessity of remaining at home, and thus be deprived of his great anticipated pleasure from an attend-

ance upon the meeting of the American Board as he had arranged with me to do."

"Is he prevented from going by any interference of his people?" the agent inquired. "I am led to believe such to be the case by the manner of your remark."

"I am mortified to say," Mr. Eldridge replied, "that he is, and that he is prevented by an individual, as the principal cause, who ought to have been the most anxious to have him attend. It need be no private matter; an individual in the station occupied by the man who figures largely in the letter, when entirely forgetful of the spirit and temper that become him, ought to be exposed. I will read the letter on my own responsibility."

Mr. Eldridge then read as follows:—

"'My dear Brother: I find myself under the necessity of informing you that I have concluded not to go to the meeting of the American Board week after next as I had fondly anticipated. I trust it will not make any difference with you. I have come to this decision from prudential reasons, and am deeply pained and mortified at their existence. You know something of the character of my people, and therefore can enter into my feelings more than it is possible for a stranger to do. In conversation with one of my deacons a few days since, I told him that I hoped he could make it convenient to see that my salary for the last quarter was soon paid, as I wanted some money to go on a journey in the course of a week or two. He asked me where I was intending to go. I replied that I was desirous of being at the meeting of the American Board, which was to be held the present year at New York. He at once burst out in a perfect rage — you know he is a very irritable and passionate man and extremely nervous — and said, "Mr. Elton, I advise you not to go, if you mean to stay here as our minister. Now,

you were off a whole week in May attending the anniversaries in Boston, and then you were off again at the meeting of the general association in June; and a good many of us think that you are off too much at such meetings. It takes a good deal of money to travel so much, and you ought to be more prudent. If you have more money than is necessary for your support, you ought to give it to the society to help pay for the meeting house." After this manner he expressed himself at some length. I attempted to argue the matter a little with him, setting forth the interest manifested by many of our people in hearing my report of the doings of the board, which I am in the habit of giving the Sabbath following its annual meeting, and likewise that my health required the relaxation of the journey, and that my enlarged usefulness to my people demanded my attendance; but all to no purpose. The deacon remained fixed in his opposition to this *waste of time and money*, as he termed it, and remarked that others in the parish coincided with him in feeling. So I have concluded to remain at home and humor the man this time. I deeply regret that there can be found in this enlightened age of the church a deacon so much lost to all that pertains to the usefulness of the pastor and the enlarged good of the people as to manifest the feelings I have now described. If there be others among my people who sympathize with him in opposition to my going to such meetings as that of the American Board, I have no doubt that he is the cause. I shall doubtless have more knowledge on this subject by and by, as there will be many inquiries made for my reasons in not going *this* year to the meeting of this missionary body.'"

"There, brother," said Mr. Eldridge, "what do you think of that letter?"

"Think? I hardly know what to think," he replied. "I

pity brother Elton from the very bottom of my heart for being under the necessity of having *such* a deacon in his church."

"The deacon does not seem to realize that his pastor needs influences from beyond the parish for his extended usefulness," Mr. Eldridge observed. "He does not appear to understand that his pastor is really engaged in seeking ways and means of usefulness when he attends the anniversaries in Boston or New York or the meeting of the American Board."

"No," said the agent. "I think the soul of this deacon is in a most melancholy condition. Were he in the exercise of true Christian feeling, he would at once perceive what excitements to zeal and what encouragement to renewed labors his pastor would have after mingling with a great body of Christians who are deeply interested in the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom."

"It is strange a people will be so unwise," said Mr. Eldridge; "but so it is. Brother Elton is a devoted pastor and a most diligent student. He feels the need of these meetings, both as a stimulus and as means of relaxation. He rarely exchanges, and is at home most of his time, laboring for the advancement of his people in all Christian virtues. I shall pity some of his good people; for I have often heard them say that they always were glad when Mr. Elton could be abroad in attendance on the various anniversaries of the church, because he was so free to communicate the knowledge he obtained. As he has a very retentive memory, they feel that his reports make them about as well acquainted with what is said and done at these meetings as they would have been had they been present themselves."

"I am acquainted with no better way for having the missionary spirit infused into a people than for the pastor to attend the annual meetings of the board," the agent

remarked. "He both hears and sees there what he would not otherwise know; and he acquires an unction, a *missionary unction*, which often endures for months. I am acquainted with a large number of brethren who say they will not allow ordinary obstacles to prevent their attendance upon our meetings. They say they there acquire an interest in missions which is a most invaluable help to them in *sustaining* the monthly concerts."

"I trust that there are but few of the brethren who are prevented from attending such meetings by reasons such as Mr. Elton assigns," Mr. Eldridge continued.

"I am not aware that I ever before heard of a brother being opposed in this manner by a *deacon*," said the agent; "but I have often heard ministers lament that some of their people complained of them for spending so much money in being away at the meetings of the board and others of a kindred character."

"I dare say," Mr. Eldridge observed, "there are some minds which cannot appreciate the situation of a minister — his mental wants — his heart wants — the need he has of stimulus and encouragement. There are many individuals who suppose it to be the easiest task to write a sermon — that all a minister has to do is to take his pen and perform the mere manual labor of using it. They do not consider that any previous study is necessary. How he can be aided in this work by spending a week abroad in attendance upon the meetings of our benevolent societies is to them a mystery. Many parishioners appear to think that we ministers go to such occasions for our own enjoyment only. It never enters their minds that we are moved and induced almost entirely to such attendance by our great desires to be to them of the most advantage — that we go to the anniversaries and to the meetings of the American Board on the same principle and from the same motives which send us into our study; viz., to be prepared

to *serve them* with more fidelity, acceptance, and profit. This contractedness of soul, which would tie up a pastor to his own parish the year in and the year out to satisfy the people that their *hired servant* has not run off, and is not wasting *their money and their time too*, I wish might not exist. It cannot be, when professors of religion urge such reasons, that they have much Christian feeling. How can they have any desires for the spread of the gospel and the conversion of the heathen when they are not willing to allow their pastor to employ the most valuable means, which are alone found in these anniversary meetings, for equipping himself fully for his great and arduous work? Were not the flame of godliness flickering in the heart, it appears to me, we should not hear of any such opposition."

"Your remarks," said the agent, "make me think of a people in Vermont who are what may be called a 'peculiar people, zealous of good works.' I was with them about six months since, and passed a few days with the greatest pleasure. They were all alive to the condition of the heathen, and have for some years past contributed nobly to our treasury. I ascertained that this interest was excited mainly by the narrative of the pastor of the doings of the board and the speeches which were made at its anniversary meetings. I found they were in the habit of remembering the annual meeting in their prayer meetings for weeks before it was to occur, and that of late years it has been their practice to make up a purse to encourage their pastor to attend. The flame of godliness, I assure you, burns brightly up that way. The church there is one of the most energetic and prosperous churches in our land."

"I am most happy to hear of such a bright example of Christian activity," Mr. Eldridge remarked. "I very much wish it might be extensively followed, and that those in our churches who would interpose obstacles to the attendance

of their pastors on the meetings of our benevolent societies might feel themselves rebuked by it. I dare say that Vermont pastor has a light heart and goes on his way rejoicing. As he goes forth bearing precious seed, he cannot feel that there may be many of his people who will trample it down to prevent it springing up and bearing fruit."

"No, no," said the agent; "the good Vermont brother feels that his people water where he plants, and that they are equally interested with himself in the success of his labors."

"His joy at the judgment as well as the joy of his people must be rich," Mr. Eldridge continued, "when he appears before the righteous Judge, saying, 'Lord, here I am and the children which thou hast given me.' I could wish brother Elton's deacon might think of that great day. If he is not careful, I am afraid he will not be found among the number when the brother shall present *his* children."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANOTHER PHASE OF PASTORAL LIFE.

The health of the good wife of Squire Davidson having been for some time in a very precarious state, it became necessary to seek its restoration and her comfort in travelling. Consequently she was much away from home, sometimes on a long journey and at other times on a short excursion. The last winter she passed at the south with her children in Virginia, and returned in April somewhat improved in health, though by no means out of danger from that insidious disease, so common at the north, that consigns numberless victims to the last resting-place of man. She had not been at home many weeks before she was admonished of the need of another journey; and her husband, having important business to transact in Greenfield, some seventy miles distant from their residence, proposed to her to take an excursion thither. It was now the commencement of the beautiful month of June, and it was first decided that they would set off the next week; but the suggestion being made by aunt Sarah, who was rapidly verging towards that bourn from whence none return, that the anniversary of her pastor's settlement would occur on the next week, Mrs. Davidson said she could not possibly forego the pleasure of hearing Mr. Eldridge's anniversary discourse. She had already heard fourteen such sermons from him, and perhaps she might not live to

hear another should she be absent when the fifteenth was delivered. Accordingly it was not till the Monday following this event that the squire and his wife left home for Greenfield. Not being in any measure urged to rapidity in their movements, — indeed, the health of Mrs. Davidson absolutely interdicted this, — they did not reach their destined town until the following Thursday.

Having completed his business at an earlier period than was anticipated, the squire proposed to vary their route homeward for the purpose of passing the Sabbath with a much-esteemed clerical friend, Mr. Willy, who was settled in Stanly. The suggestion was very pleasant to Mrs. Davidson, as she had long been wishing to redeem a pledge made to Mr. and Mrs. Willy of a visit. Accordingly, after dinner on Friday, the squire directed his course towards Stanly, at which place he arrived on the following afternoon long before the sun was shaded in the west. Their reception at the parsonage was the more gratifying because it was so very unexpected. Many a time had the wish been expressed by Mr. and Mrs. Willy that they might have the pleasure of a visit from them ; for the remembrance of the days they passed a few years before under their most hospitable roof had afforded them at many intervals since the most lively satisfaction. They were anxious for an opportunity to attempt the reciprocation of their kindness, and indulged the hope that such a desire might be gratified ; but perhaps they were not very strong in the *faith* that such desire would be realized, as they were well aware how very large was the circle of their friends who moved in the same elevated sphere in which a kind Providence had placed them. Not because Squire Davidson was accounted an aristocrat, and could find no enjoyment in the humble abode of a country clergyman in a secluded territory, was the faith of Mr. and Mrs. Willy slender that they should one day have them as

their guests. Far from this. Though very wealthy, and though he and his family moved in several cities in the highest grade of society, yet there was not the first feeling in the heart of Squire Davidson and wife that begat in them the sentiment that they were in the least descending when they were in the company of any of their Christian friends who lived, not for this world alone, but for a higher, a purer state. Because their presence among the hills of Stanly and in the parsonage of its people surely evinced an interest which, perhaps, could not have been more strongly expressed in the occupants of this parsonage, did Mr. and Mrs. Willy greatly rejoice when they welcomed them to their door.

Stanly was not a very remarkable place. Seldom was a carriage seen passing through the town that was not recognized as belonging either to some of its inhabitants or as coming from an adjacent territory. When, therefore, the squire rode up to Mr. Willy's with his large gray horse in an elegantly sparkling harness, and attached to a splendid chaise, the little folks within, of whom there were six boys, were in no little commotion. There was ejaculation among them and wonderment. Such an establishment, perhaps, they had never before seen. True, Colonel Hollis and Captain Handy had covered wagons; but most of the carriages which moved in their vicinity were of the ruder sort, without any top, either of canvas or leather. The little hands were so busy with the different parts and trappings of the harness, and the questions to papa were so many about this and that, as retarded Mr. Willy somewhat in disencumbering the steed and in securing the chaise under cover. At last, however, the task was accomplished, and, divesting himself of his working frock, put on always for service like this, Mr. Willy was in the parlor with his distinguished guests. Mrs. Willy thereupon left the room for the labor of

preparing tea, which, perhaps, would have been less perplexing and sooner accomplished *if she had not been a pastor's wife*, but that of a mechanic or farmer, or even of a common day laborer, who was promptly paid for his services. *Pay day* had not been recently in her husband's parish; and many articles which would have been in the house, out of which a respectable supper could be prepared, had such a day not been very remote, were not there. A little flour had been saved from the barrel *presented* by an unknown friend some four months before, and from this the good wife proceeded to make some biscuit: but as for cake or pies, alas! Mrs. Willy longed most wistfully for the means of making them; but the country parsonage was, and had been for a long time, unblessed with them. Whilst thus perplexed and mortified, she involuntarily burst forth with saying, "I declare, I only wish some of our people were here now who say so much about the good living of their minister and the easy task of his wife; I rather think they would alter their opinions somewhat. I guess they would find that we did not live on the fat of the land." However, checking her impatience and murmuring, she proceeded to her work, made her biscuit, spread her table, using the cloth, china, and other table furniture which belonged to the outfit her father gave her at her marriage. She drew from the oven the baked beans and brown bread, and presently announced to her husband and friends that tea was waiting. When all were seated at the table, and as Mrs. Willy was pouring the tea, she discovered the absence of her best sugar bowl. Calling to her child, she asked him to go into the parlor and bring it out. The child obeyed, and, returning, said there was *nothing* in it. This announcement crimsoned the face of the mother; for she *well knew* that, if there was no sugar *there*, the house did not afford the article.

"I really thought there was sugar there," Mrs. Willy

remarked. "Well, I hope our friends will excuse us if we help them to brown sugar."

"O, certainly," Mrs. Davidson replied. "We are not at all particular."

"Your acquaintance with the circumstances of ministers, squire," Mr. Willy observed, "has doubtless led you to feel that they often have to do as they *can*, and not as they *would*."

"I am sorry," said the squire, "that the churches will allow it; but it is a most melancholy consideration, that often the greatest injustice is done to the clergy, both in deficiency of compensation and in the great irregularity in the payment of their paltry salaries. I could wish it were otherwise; for no class in the community are entitled to better compensation than ministers."

"I really wish," said Mrs. Willy, "that some of our people could hear you make remarks like this, as it often comes to our ears that they think Mr. Willy has too large a salary."

"How much has he?" Mrs. Davidson inquired.

"Only four hundred and fifty dollars; and *that* is very tardily paid," Mrs. Willy said. "They are now owing two hundred dollars for the last year, which closed in February, and we have had but about thirty dollars from them on the first quarter of the present year."

"How do your people think you can get along, Mr. Willy," the squire asked, "if they are so dilatory in paying you your salary?"

"O, I do not know as they think at all on the subject," Mr. Willy replied. "I have a little land, and perhaps they think that I can raise enough from that to live upon."

"Well, it is unjust for them to withhold from you your due," said the squire, "even if your land does produce enough to support your family, which I presume is not the case."

"Far from it," said Mr. Willy. "I have not more than twelve acres, and seven of that is fit only for pasture. I can keep one cow and horse only; and I never plant much more than a single acre."

Tea being over, and the squire and his wife having gone back to the parlor, Mrs. Willy stopped her husband, who was following them, and detained him a while in the room where the tea table stood, to deliberate upon the state of the pantry.

"What shall we do, husband? We have no more flour in the house. The last two quarts, which I have carefully kept for these three weeks for an emergency, I have used for the biscuit we had for tea. We have no fresh meat, you know; no white sugar, and but little of brown; no pies, nor any thing to make them of; and here we are, with these rich people with us to stay over the Sabbath, and perhaps longer!"

"I will go right away, my dear, to Deacon Foster and borrow of him five dollars, and will go to the store and the butcher's and get a supply. Deacon Foster, you know, always has a little money by him, and he has often told me that he would share the last dollar with me if it were necessary for our comfort or convenience."

"I know that, husband, and I thought there was no other way for you to do but to go to him. He will understand the case, and so will his wife."

Returning to the parlor, Mr. Willy sat a while conversing with his friends until Mrs. Willy had completed the task which always falls to the wife, in the absence of a daughter or maid, after a meal. When she appeared, her husband excused himself from the circle by saying that he had a little business to transact which would oblige him to be absent for a short time.

As we are now to follow him to the house of his good deacon, it may be interesting to the reader to know more

of the man from whom he was sure of receiving important aid in this the pastor's time of need. Deacon Foster cannot be set forth as a man remarkable either for general intelligence, or refinement of manners, or greatness of wealth; for, though "a good liver," his farm and stock — which were neither extensive — constituted all his property. Having always lived where his pastor found him, and never been thirty miles from home in his life of sixty years, his intercourse with the world would not very materially enlarge his mind or improve his manners. The authors with whom he was most familiar were greatly antiquated; but, because they treated of subjects which for some reason or other interested him more than all others, he chose to devote what leisure time he had — which was not much on the weekdays — to them almost exclusively. These authors were such men as Moses, and Joshua, and David, and Solomon, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. He read them and pondered what they wrote so much as to have his mind and heart very much imbued with their spirit; and, because of this, he most nobly filled the important office in the church which gave him the title of deacon. All thought that he was a fit man for a deacon because the *Bible* had *so much* to do with his thoughts and his conduct. Somehow or other, there was no craftiness about him, nor overreaching, nor hypocrisy. His face on the Sabbath was no longer than on other days; and he was, withal, bound up in his pastor and in ministers in general; and the impression very generally prevailed that he was thus singular because he read the Bible so much and was so careful to practise what he read.

After a ride of some ten minutes the pastor of Stanly was at the door of this good deacon, which, in answer to his knock, was soon opened by a lady whose countenance was the personification of goodness, and was therefore

every way worthy to be the companion of the man whom all the community around had long called *the good deacon.*

"We are very glad to see you, Mr. Willy," Mrs. Foster remarked. "Mr. Foster and I have just been talking about you; and he is getting ready to go to your house, I believe. You've got some company, have you not, Mr. Willy?"

"What makes you ask that question, my good woman?" inquired the pastor.

"O," she replied, "neighbor Porter was here about two hours ago, and he told us he saw you taking out a very beautiful horse from a grand carriage as he passed your house this afternoon. We thought it was likely some of your friends had come to spend the Sabbath with you."

"Well, it is even so," Mr. Willy observed. "We have been taken altogether by surprise by two of the best people on the earth; and, what is a little unfortunate, we have but very little in the house wherewith we can decently entertain them. For this reason I have come down here to see the deacon and get a little help."

"We have been talking about this since neighbor Porter was here," Mrs. Foster observed. "I told my husband I was afraid your wife would not be prepared for company, and I said to him he must go up there to-night and see you."

"You are a very thoughtful woman," observed Mr. Willy; "and I am much obliged to you for your consideration."

"It is too bad that our people are so backward about paying the salary," Mrs. Foster said.

"It is very unfortunate for us," Mr. Willy remarked. "I should not have been down here to-night in this anxious state of mind if I only had my salary paid with any decent promptness. Where is your husband?"

"He is out to the barn dressing a calf. When he heard

that you had company, he said he would kill the calf immediately, and not wait till next week, as he was calculating to do. He thought the leg of veal he was intending to give you might be as acceptable at this time as at any other."

This announcement was too much for the sensitive nature of the pastor, and, overcome with emotion, he had to rise and turn his face to the window to conceal the tears which were trickling down his face. "O," thought he, whilst brushing away the tears, "if all my people, or but a small part of them, felt as this family feel for their minister, what a load of care and anxiety would be removed and what strong encouragement there would be to labor hard for their good! How *freely* I would study and how cheerfully labor!"

"I believe," said Mr. Willy, "I will go out to the barn and see your husband."

"He is coming in, sir; I hear his steps," said Mrs. Foster.

Presently the door opened, and the good deacon appeared with a fine leg of veal in his hand, and, as he laid it down on the table, humorously said, after welcoming his pastor, —

"*You did not hear the pig squeal*, did you, Mr. Willy?"

The pastor, comprehending the significance of the remark, (what minister of a few years could not?) good naturedly said, —

"My ears have not been greeted by such a sound; if they had been, I should have been tempted, within the last few hours, to have followed the direction of the noise, I confess. Deacon, I have come down here to say to you that I have got company at my house, and nothing for them to eat but pork and beans and brown bread; and I want to borrow five dollars to go to the store and get a supply."

"Yes, yes," said the deacon; "I was afraid so. I heard you had company, and was going up to see you. You may have the five dollars; but perhaps it won't be necessary for you to go to the store to-night. Mrs. Foster, have you got the basket ready?"

"O, yes," the good woman said. "Mr. Willy, I told you my husband was going up to your house with a leg of veal; and I have put into a basket two loaves of white bread, and some cake, and half a dozen pies. Now, if *there is any thing else* that you want, if we have got them, you are welcome to them. They are your due from the parish."

"As the deacon has loaned me five dollars," said Mr. Willy, "I guess I'll go to the store."

"What are you going there for?" asked the deacon. "Do tell; for it is some way there, and I don't want you to go if it is not necessary. I want you to save your money for some other time."

"Well, to be frank, I was going to get some flour, and some meat, and some white sugar. The meat, through your kindness, I shall not have to get, and the bread will last till Monday; but we have no white sugar, and but a little of any kind."

"You need not go to the store," Mrs. Foster said. "I will get you some sugar."

The clean napkin was soon withdrawn from the new bushel basket, which had never before been used, and there was just space enough left to admit two papers of sugar which the good woman had carefully put up. The cloth was then tied down, and the deacon took the basket to the wagon of his pastor and gently laid it therein. Returning to the house, the pastor, in the overflowing of his heart, thanked both him and his wife for their very acceptable donations, and, taking from his pocket his wallet, handed back the five dollars he had but a few moments before

received from the deacon, saying he should not need it now.

"Well," said the deacon, "you are very welcome to it. I shall not take it. You ought to be with money in your pocket; and I mean to make some stir in the parish now that I think will make the people pay up. It is wicked that things should be so. They can't agree to give half what they are able; and it is a shame that they don't pay up the little they agree to give."

Mr. Willy, touched in every part of his soul by the tender, generous impulses of both the deacon and his wife, which led him to feel how well they appreciated the situation of their pastor, was soon on his way to his home. Twilight had nearly gone as he rode into his yard. As he was taking his horse from the wagon the squire came out, and, noticing a new basket therein, remarked, he was afraid his friend had been put to some inconvenience by having company come in so unexpectedly.

"I suppose you have been to the store, Mr. Willy? as I see you have a new basket in your wagon."

"No, sir. I have been prevented from going by the generosity of one of my deacons."

"Well, I am glad you have some green spots in your field," said the squire. "They are very refreshing to a pastor's heart."

"I have got but *one such spot*," Mr. Willy said, "in my territory; and I have been to that to-night."

"Better have one than none," the squire remarked. "Some pastors that I know have but an arid plain for their field."

"Yes, yes. I know that, squire. It is but a poor reward that most ministers get in this world."

"The riches are to come, then," the squire observed.

"That is all the consolation and encouragement which the great body of the clergy have," Mr. Willy said.

The pastor's horse was now in his stall, and the wagon under cover, and the large basket was taken right into the room where Mrs. Willy and Mrs. Davidson were sitting; and, as it was laid down by the feet of the former, Mr. Willy said,—

"There, wife; there is a present from Deacon Foster."

"As you have brought in the basket here, I suppose you intend that I shall open it at once," Mrs. Willy replied. So with her scissors she cut the cord which confined the covering and proceeded to take out the contents. As she took the two papers Mr. Willy observed, "That is white and brown sugar, I suppose." "And there," said Mrs. Willy, "are two loaves — what large ones! — of white bread; and here are two, four, six pies." "And here," said Mr. Willy, catching up the other, — "here is a large leg of veal."

"Very acceptable and very opportune are all these articles," Mrs. Willy remarked. "Now, to tell the truth, Mrs. Davidson, we have pretty nigh run ashore for eatables except of the ruder kind, and these articles are just what we need. I remarked at tea, you know, that our salary was not paid very promptly; and we have had to live of late almost any how. It is very trying; but so it is."

"There is not all," Mr. Willy remarked. "The deacon gave me a five-dollar bill. 'Tis true I went down there expressly to borrow the amount for the purpose of going to the store and the butcher's; but they had anticipated our wants in part and insisted on knowing all; and thus I have been prevented from going farther. They had heard that we had company; and the deacon, intending to kill a calf the beginning of next week and give us a part, thought he would not wait, but killed it just after Mr. Porter told him he saw me taking care of a splendid horse, and was intending to come up here this evening with the

veal, and, I suppose, the bread and pies. I handed him back the money which he loaned me; but he would not take it. He said I ought not to be without money, and I was very welcome to the five dollars."

"The deacon and his wife are parishioners worth having," Mrs. Willy observed.

"Well, Mr. Willy, cannot any thing be done to get your people into better habits?" the squire asked.

"A change might be effected, I think," said Mrs. Willy, "if husband would think it to be his duty to make a little stir about their delinquency in paying the salary. It is nothing but inconsideration on the part of the people. They are an able people, and might pay double what they agree to pay and not feel it at all."

"I never like to say much about my salary," Mr. Willy remarked; "but I have thought for some time past that I should be obliged to do something. But perhaps I shall be saved that necessity now; for the deacon told me he intended to make an effort which he thought would bring the people to their senses."

"I have been telling husband," Mrs. Willy said, "that he ought to insist on having another hundred dollars added to his salary, and to have it paid promptly."

"That would be unwise, I think," remarked Mr. Willy, "to ask for more salary."

"I don't think so," the wife replied. "The parishes about us who have settled ministers lately pay six and seven hundred dollars now, and they are not so able as our parish to do so. I presume, if we should leave here, the people would not think of paying *less than seven hundred.*"

"I have no doubt of that," Mr. Willy said; "but they only agreed to give me four hundred at first; and I accepted the salary."

"But times have changed, you know, husband, since

you were settled. Money don't go so far now as it did then."

"The people ought to think of this, I confess," said Mr. Willy, "and ought to come up unasked and pay a suitable salary; but it would be unwise in me to insist on their doing any thing more than fulfilling their agreement with me and every quarter promptly make a payment."

"That is a fact," the squire remarked. "Parishes who settled pastors years ago, when the means of living were not so high as they now are and when the expenses of the clergy were not so many as at the present time, ought to be reminded of their obligations to add to the compensation of their ministers by the consideration that, were they now to settle a pastor, they would be obliged to pay a much larger salary."

"Certainly it is but justice for them to do so," Mr. Willy remarked. "Because I was fortunate enough to have a few hundred dollars by my wife, sufficient to pay for the place where I now live, it is wrong for the people to think that I shall not move away if my salary is not raised, and to be willing that I should have a less sum than what they know they would be obliged to pay another minister."

"It is morally wrong, I think, to treat a pastor in this way," the squire said; "and I cannot believe he would be thus treated if the people would only *consider* a little *with the Bible in their hands.*"

"O," said Mr. Willy, "if people had this precious book in their hands more, and if divine truth had more reflection by them, ministers would never have any reason to complain. If all the people were like good Deacon Foster, what blessed times these would be! And he is only what the Bible has made him."

The evening being now far spent, worship was observed, and the friends separated for the night.

On Monday morning the squire remarked,—

"I have been thinking anew, since I have been here, how much a people lost by cutting short a pastor's support. When a minister is pinched he cannot be a free man; he cannot study with his whole mind; he cannot give his whole heart to his work. He must be anxious, often *very anxious*, about his family; so much so as to unfit him for duty."

"There is too much truth in that, squire," Mr. Willy remarked. "I know all about it from much deep and bitter experience."

"Now, your people," the squire said, "you have told me, were all well off, and there are some hundred families of them; they ought to be ashamed of themselves to treat you as they do. They ought to pay promptly your salary, and to give you at least seven hundred dollars. They make a very respectable congregation, I see. They have a fine house for a sanctuary; and really they ought to be mortified that they do not handsomely support you and a little more. They would gain by it, I know."

"I rather think they would have more sermons from me which were better if they should do this," Mr. Willy observed.

"I have no doubt of it, sir," said the squire. "It is not in ordinary humanity to do much when perplexed and burdened with anxiety, especially in the way of profound study."

* * * * * *

* * * * * *

"I am sorry to see you getting ready to leave us," Mrs. Willy observed to Mrs. Davidson, who entered the room in a manner that denoted such an event to be nigh.

"We have made a long visit, and I feel somewhat anxious to return home," Mrs. Davidson replied.

Soon the carriage was at the door, and the baggage in the chaise; and, as the squire was about getting in, he handed Mr. Willy a very small piece of paper, folded into the dimensions of a pipe stem, and remarked, "This may be of some use to you, Mr. Willy, after we are out of town." Then, bidding all anew good by, the horse fleetly moved out of the parsonage yard towards his own plentiful stable.

On entering the house and unfolding the thin paper, the reader may judge of the *use it would be* in the straitened pastor's family when informed it was a *twenty-dollar bank bill.*

CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNREASONABLE PASTORAL TAX.

'I BELIEVE I shall not subscribe so much this year as I did last," said a parishioner to a committee man whose office it was to raise the pastor's salary. "Our minister must be getting rich." This remark illustrates a feeling often expressed in many a country parish. The minister becomes opulent out of a sum at which many a mechanic would scout as being far too meagre a compensation for his services! The minister lays up money when his next-door neighbor, with a smaller family and no public expenses to meet, who practises rigid economy withal, finds it a difficult matter to live on two hundred dollars more than the pastor receives! The minister lays up money! Ask his wife, whose wits are often so severely taxed in making as it were, something out of nothing, because their circumstances are so straitened that they have not the wherewithal to supply their wants after the manner of the great majority of their people. For this class of parishioners the parsonage has often a voice which might relieve them of their fears.

In one of his vacations Mr. Eldridge passed a few days with a relative of his who was the pastor of a large congregation. Whilst reading one morning in the parlor, a stranger to him was introduced into the sitting room adjoining. The door being partly opened, enabled him

to hear the conversation which there was had as readily as he could have done had he been present. The gentleman had not long been seated before the doctor entered, when the following conversation took place, which both amused and edified Mr. Eldridge:—

"I thought I would run over, doctor," said Mr. Fisher, "and see you about that council which is to meet next week, and ascertain how it will be best for us to go."

"I do not know," the doctor replied, "as it will be convenient for me to attend. The distance is so great that I can hardly afford the time which an attendance would require. It would about spoil the week."

"I suppose it is an important case," Mr. Fisher observed, "and your presence is much desired, or they would not have sent such a great distance to our church."

"Yes," said the doctor; "I regard it as an important case. Since the letter missive arrived I have received a letter from one of the committee of the church urging me by all means to be present."

"I rather think you had better conclude to go, doctor. It is a pleasant season of the year, and the journey, undoubtedly, would be beneficial to you. You need relaxation. If you will go it would give me pleasure to defray all the expenses of your journey."

"I am much obliged to you for your generosity," the doctor replied; "and perhaps you have made the inducement sufficiently strong. I will think over the matter and inform you to-morrow morning of my decision. It will be considerable of a tax upon you, Mr. Fisher, should I conclude to go as you so kindly propose."

"I never before have been chosen a delegate," Mr. Fisher remarked; "but I supposed it was expected that the pastor would not be at any expense in attending a council. The delegate *usually* pays the charges at these times, does he not, doctor?"

The doctor, with a smile, observed, "*Sometimes*, when I have been called to a council in the adjacent towns, my delegate has invited me to ride with him; but I rather think I have the more *frequently* gone at my own expense, and, when I have gone in my carriage, *carried my delegate.*"

"I do not think," Mr. Fisher said, "that you have been treated fairly by your delegates. They ought to have borne all the expense."

"I am not sure about that," the doctor replied. "I do not think it decided yet that a delegate, any more than a pastor, should meet the charges incurred by attending councils."

"The pastor, you know, doctor, always goes; but his delegate is not often the same individual. It would be better, therefore, for the delegate to bear such expense than for the pastor; for in this way the burden might, in the course of years, fall equally upon all the brethren of the church, as they might every one be chosen to this service."

"I think," the doctor remarked, "there is something in this consideration in favor of a delegate's meeting the expense rather than the pastor; but I have long been of the opinion the tax ought to be borne directly by the church. Now, I have been settled in the ministry upwards of forty years; and, as I have kept an account of my yearly expenses, I know what it has cost me to attend councils. In the early part of my ministry I was not called to any great distance by such occasions; but for many years past I have been often required to go very far from home for the purpose of attending councils. Now, Mr. Fisher, what do you think my expenses have been on an average for forty years past in attending councils, computing my time at ordinary day wages, and my travelling charges, including, of course, pay for my horse and chaise, when I have gone with them?"

"It would be impossible for me to answer your ques-

tion," Mr. Fisher replied. "I am aware that you have been to a large number of councils for several years past. Perhaps it has cost you twenty dollars a year, and perhaps forty."

"Well, sir," said the doctor; "since I received the letter requesting my attendance at the council next week, I have computed the expense which I have incurred for the last forty-two years in attending councils, and I find that it will average thirty-four dollars and sixty-three cents per year."

"That is a large sum, doctor," said Mr. Fisher, who, taking his pencil, proceeded to find the full amount; and having done this, he exclaimed, in great astonishment, "It makes fourteen hundred fifty-four dollars and eighty-six cents."

"Yes, sir, that is the amount; one thousand four hundred dollars and eighty-six cents," said the doctor.

"The people do not understand this subject," Mr. Fisher observed, "do they, doctor?"

"That is a fact; they do not," the doctor replied. "Neither ministers nor people are aware of the great tax imposed on the clergy by attendance on councils. It is a great item in the expenses of many ministers, a very great item."

"Well, I suppose you are oftener called to councils than ministers in general," said Mr. Fisher.

"Not more frequently than many others," the pastor replied. "I very often meet the same brethren on different councils. The more a minister is called to attend on such occasions, the more he will be. The longer a minister lives, the more he is called on councils in important and difficult cases."

"I think, sir, in these days, when so much is doing to improve the age, something might be done in relation to this evil, for it is a great evil to pastors," Mr. Fisher remarked.

"I have long thought," the doctor observed, "that the churches ought to be enlightened on this subject, and that some principles ought to be agreed upon whereby pastors can be relieved from this heavy tax."

"Well, doctor, if you go next week, I'll see that you are not the poorer for your journey."

"*You will be*, however," said the pastor, smiling.

"I'll take care, doctor, not to get in as deep in such matters as you have, I assure you," Mr. Fisher observed.

"I presume so," said the doctor; "laymen have a better wisdom in these concerns than pastors."

"I do not think there are many laymen to be found who would expend nearly fifteen hundred dollars in the course of forty years in attendance on councils," Mr. Fisher remarked.

"Ah, well," said the doctor, "I think the church ought to meet these expenses: either the one inviting a council ought to pay those composing it, so that they will suffer no loss in attending, or each church sending ought to defray the expenses of both pastor and delegate."

"Either of these ways would relieve the pastor, and not be any great tax upon the delegate, too, would they not, doctor? The suggestion is a new one to me, I confess, and I think it would be new to most of our churches," Mr. Fisher observed. "I should think there might be an equitable plan adopted in relation to this matter. Which of the methods do you think would be best, doctor?"

"I have not yet fully made up my mind on the subject," the pastor replied. "There are weighty considerations in favor of each; but I am leaning strongly towards the one that brings the entire expense on the church which calls the council. In the first place, it is more accordant with the principle that regulates the general transaction of business. Now, if the machinery in your factory does not work well, and you cannot tell exactly what the

matter is, you would not think of writing a letter to some individual who resides fifteen or forty miles from you, who you thought could remedy the evil, requesting his presence at your establishment to advise and assist you in the premises, without expecting to remunerate him well for his attendance and services. Nor would the individual come without expecting a fair compensation."

"That is all true, doctor."

"Well, if our town," the pastor continued, "has business to be transacted in another part of the state which requires the cool and patient consideration of some practical men, they would not think of sending one of the selectmen into the neighborhood where the business is to be done, and ordering him to look up some wise and fit persons there, and ask their advice and attention to the matter, without paying them for their trouble."

"Certainly not," Mr. Fisher replied. "We should expect a good round bill would be the consequence."

"To illustrate the case a little further," the doctor replied: "supposing your factory company and the other one near you should have a dispute about the right of water; the two corporations, in agreeing to refer their differences to an arbitration, would not expect the arbiters to come here and spend one or more days in considering the matter without compensating them fully for their trouble."

"Of course not," Mr. Fisher said. "They would come, not for their pleasure or profit, but for the advantage of the parties calling them."

"Very true," said the doctor. "Now, for whose benefit does an ecclesiastical council convene? Manifestly for the advantage of the party or parties calling such council. Now, why not have those who invite the council pay the expenses of those composing it?"

"I can see no good reason why they should not," Mr. Fisher replied.

"There is another consideration," the pastor observed, "which has much influence with me in having the expenses of a council borne by the party calling it; and that is, councils would not be so frequent as they now are, nor would they be as large. If a church knew they would be liable to pay a large amount if a council were called, the occasion for convening such a body would be really urgent. Every possible endeavor would be made to avoid the necessity of such an expense; and I have no doubt that many difficulties would be adjusted, without being made public through a council, to the great saving of private reputation and of scandal to the cause of Christ. When every attempt for a private settlement of difficulties had failed and there was real necessity for advice from without, care would be taken when a council was called to have it as small as possible; for the smaller the number a council contains, the smaller would be the expense."

"I think, doctor, you have made out a pretty clear case, that it would be best to have the party calling a council be at all the expense attending its convocation. I wish you would publish something on this subject in the religious newspapers. I have been astonished at what you have told me this afternoon in relation to the tax which has been levied on you by your attendance on councils; and I think people in general, were they to have a few such facts laid before them, accompanied by such suggestions as you have made to me, would be for having some method adopted whereby the clergy would not be impoverished as you have been. Every pastor, to a greater or less extent, must be a sufferer under the present system of calling councils."

"That is true," the doctor remarked. "Ministers in general may not think much on the subject; but their attendance in council is no small item in the expenses to which they are subject."

Just now a carriage was driven into the doctor's yard, and presently a neighboring minister was introduced.

* * * * * *

"I can't stop long, doctor. I was riding by, and I could not very well resist my inclination to call a moment," Rev. Mr. Annable observed.

"Sit down, brother, sit down," said the doctor; "don't be in such haste; our tea will be ready soon."

"O, I cannot possibly stop; I have a lecture this evening, and I must hasten home. I did not know how to leave; but I could not well avoid it. I have been over to brother Tenney's parish to attend a funeral. He has gone on a journey, you know. I don't know how they happened to send for me; but the friends of the deceased did; and so I hired a horse and buggy and travelled eleven miles over there; and now I am on my way home."

"They paid you for your carriage hire, I hope," the doctor said.

"Not a word was said about that," Mr. Annable said. "The friends *thanked* me very much for my trouble; but nothing more was said."

"There, Mr. Fisher," said the doctor, "there is another outlet to a minister's salary. The attendance of funerals in adjacent towns which happen to be destitute of pastors often is the occasion of much expense to a pastor.

"Mr. Fisher and I," the doctor continued, "have been conversing before you came in, brother Annable, on the tax to which pastors were subjected by reason of their being called so frequently to sit in councils; and now your having been abroad to a distant parish to officiate at a funeral suggests another way in which we are often taxed."

"It is something of a tax, I confess," Mr. Annable observed. "I shall have to pay out for carriage hire this afternoon about two dollars. Week before last I was

called to Highland parish, about seven miles from my house, where you know they are without a minister, to attend a funeral, and I spent one dollar and a quarter for horse hire. I presume I pay ten or twelve dollars every year for a conveyance to the funerals I am called to attend abroad; and I do not know as ever I was offered a cent for my trouble. Well, I must be going, or I shall not be in season for my lecture."

* * * * * *

After his departure Mr. Fisher observed, —

"I have discovered this afternoon, doctor, no small channel through which a pastor's salary passes out without being of any benefit to himself or family."

"Don't you wonder now," inquired the pastor, "that ministers don't lay up something handsome out of their salaries?"

"I think," Mr. Fisher replied, "the wonder is, how they can get along as well as they do and live. It is high time, I think, that the community were better informed in relation to these unthought-of expenses of ministers, such as those arising from their attending councils and funerals abroad."

"There might be much said to enlighten the people in relation to this matter," the doctor observed; "and I think something ought to be done. When the services of a clergyman at a funeral out of his own parish are requested, the friends of the deceased sending for him ought by all means to remunerate him would they be just in their dealings."

"Most certainly they ought," Mr. Fisher replied. "A minister, of all men, ought not to be required to pay from his scanty salary a single dollar unnecessarily; and I am sure it is not necessary for him to do it when called abroad to attend funerals; for he ought to go at the expense of those who desire his services."

Taking his hat in hand to leave for home, Mr. Fisher continued, —

"Well, doctor, I can see no other way to remove the evils of which we have been speaking but to agitate the subject in the community. I think, if the attention of the churches was directed to this matter, they would soon be disposed to abate the injustice which is now so often practised towards ministers. I cannot think many years would pass before pastors would find themselves much relieved. It is now almost intolerable that these heavy items of expense of which we have been speaking should be allowed to diminish the value of a pastor's salary. I am persuaded that it is nothing but inconsideration on the part of the people that now imposes these taxes upon ministers, which I desire to see speedily removed. Agitate, then, the subject, and invite your brethren to assist in this important work; and you may depend upon it there will be better times for the ministry in respect to these evils."

CHAPTER XX.

THE PASTOR'S WIFE.

Mrs. Davidson, though in very feeble health, was yet benefited, as she conceived, by being out in the open air. Consequently, on almost every pleasant day, she might be seen abroad. On an afternoon in September she called at the house of her pastor, and was introduced by the girl who answered at the door into the parlor. Mr. Eldridge being absent, Mrs. Davidson sat some time alone, and, being informed that Mrs. Eldridge was at home, wondered at her long delay in coming into the room. At length the door was opened and the pastor's wife entered, having a countenance that denoted that she had been seeking relief from grief in tears. Having always received so much sympathy from her friend who had called as to regard her with some of those feelings which exist in the heart of a confiding daughter towards a kind, watchful, and indulgent mother, she was not, therefore, embarrassed or distrustful, but at once remarked, on seeing Mrs. Davidson, that she had been up stairs for upwards of an hour having "*a good cry.*"

"You know, Mrs. Davidson, that a minister's wife is in a peculiar situation, and that her trials come sometimes in a sudden and unexpected manner."

"O, yes, dear," the good lady observed; "I do know that your position in life is very trying; and sometimes I

have wondered that any young lady would consent to marry a clergyman."

"I have thought that I should never be so affected again as I have been this afternoon," Mrs. Eldridge remarked, "by any thing which might be said to me by individuals in the parish."

"What have you heard recently, my friend?" Mrs. Davidson inquired.

"O, nothing more than I have heard before, I suppose. Miss Bemis has called here this afternoon, and she has had considerable to say in regard to my domestic matters and my influence here in the parish."

"I really wish Miss Bemis had something else to do besides gathering up the gossip of the community and coming here to report to you," Mrs. Davidson observed.

"She annoys me very much, and has done so ever since I have been married," Mrs. Eldridge said. "It almost makes me shudder whenever I see her; for I always expect to hear some unpleasant tale."

"What has she been saying to-day?" Mrs. Davidson inquired.

"She has been talking about the appearance of our house for one thing," Mrs. Eldridge said.

"The appearance of your house! Why, what of it? Does it not appear well enough to suit her ladyship?" Mrs. Davidson asked. "I do not know of a house in town where there is more neatness displayed, both in doors and out, than what I have seen here; and I have heard the same remark made a thousand times, I dare say, by different people in the parish."

"I suppose the house did not look very neat week before last," Mrs. Eldridge said. "You know I was sick most of the week, and our girl was sick too. A strange girl could not be expected to keep all things in their places and to preserve the house in the same neatness as she might if I had been about to assist and direct her."

"Did Miss Bemis particularize the appearance of your house week before last?" Mrs. Davidson asked.

"She was obliged to at last," Mrs. Eldridge said; "for I thought it was my duty to be pretty plain with her, she was so direct in her insinuations; and I asked her when she or any one else had ever seen the confusion and dirt here which she had the impudence to describe. I told her I had never seen the house looking as she said it did; and I asked her to tell me when it did look after this manner. Then she was obliged to say it did look so week before last."

"How cruel, how very cruel and inconsiderate, it was in Miss Bemis to say any thing about such things when she knew that you were sick at that time and that Hannah was sick too! I should have thought she would have had more discretion," Mrs. Davidson said.

"She remarked, by way of apology, at last, that she should not have said any thing about it; but she had heard so much said in the parish in regard to the state of the house then that she felt it to be her *duty* to converse with me in relation to it."

"You had a good many in to see you that week, did you not?" Mrs. Davidson asked.

"O, yes; there were many who called in to inquire after my health; and I suppose there were some who took occasion to gratify their curiosity and look round where, perhaps, it was not proper they should be. Indeed, I know two or three ladies went pretty much all over the house; for Margaret has told me since Miss Bemis was in, in answer to some of my inquiries, that Mrs. Otis and Miss Drew asked her if they might not just look round a little. She said, too, they asked her a great many questions about my concerns, and she said, '*I thought, ma'am, they were real impudent.*'"

"Well, such things are really trying," Mrs. Davidson

observed; "but they will not detract in the least from the high estimation in which you are held by the good people of the parish."

"No, I suppose not," Mrs. Eldridge said; "but, after all, these stories do have some effect. You know there are many families who seldom call here, and never see me only when I call upon *them*. These may have their prejudices excited against me by hearing such things said about my house appearing as Miss Bemis describes."

"You have been here too long a time to be injured in the least by these things." Mrs. Davidson said; "your character is too well established."

"I hope you are correct," Mrs. Eldridge remarked; "but then I always am fearful that such stories have some effect to lessen the good opinion of one in relation to whom they are circulated. There are many people who only hear the fact; and they take it for *truth*, and never know to the contrary. From my experience and observation, I have found that foolish and groundless reports of ministers' wives often do much towards prejudicing a people against their minister. I was at Mrs. Washburn's last fall, whose husband is settled in the next town to where my father lives, and she was complaining to me of what some of their people said in relation to herself and husband. She is not a very robust lady, but yet one who is a most excellent wife and housekeeper; and, because she is sometimes laid aside by sickness and has to rely entirely on hired help, the people say she is extravagant and it is no wonder that her husband can't live on his salary, or cannot study more, as he has so much to do in the care of his wife and children. She told me that her husband intended to be on the lookout for a new field of labor; because he was convinced that these stories were not only injuring his usefulness, but likewise contributing to the prostration of her health."

"You need not fear that any such result will follow the stories Miss Bemis has been telling you, my dear friend," said Mrs. Davidson. "I do think it was very unfeeling in her to come here with them."

"O, it was; and when I considered that I was sick, and Hannah was sick likewise, and that we had a new girl, and there was so much to be done, I could not but weep most freely. If I had been well and the house had been in confusion, I could have heard of it with more composure; but, as it was, I could not help feeling it was almost barbarous in any one to feel like censuring me."

"There are some people who never make any allowance for a minister's wife. I do not know why it is, but some people take great delight in seizing hold of almost any thing which they can convert to the disadvantage of one in your position," Mrs. Davidson observed. "The only way is, to do right and be indifferent to the sayings of such."

"Miss Bemis told me people thought it very strange that we made our children work as they do. She said our daughters were confined in the house most of the time when they were not at school, and that our boys were very seldom seen out in the street in play with other boys."

"I do not think persons have any right to interfere with the management of your children," Mrs. Davidson said. "I wish all children were as well behaved and as promising as yours. I have often remarked to our friends that I thought your children were models, both in habits and conduct."

"We are not indifferent to the observation of our friends of course," Mrs. Eldridge observed; "but our children are managed both by husband and myself after our own convictions of duty. We feel that it is very important that they acquire habits of industry, and that they

learn to consider that they are to be sources of interest and pleasure to each other. Mr. Eldridge is very particular to have employment for his sons, and I am no less so in regard to the daughters. It is not true that they are confined most of the time and that they do not mingle with other children; for we are anxious to have them learn the ways of others; and, at suitable times and with proper companions, we have them go abroad."

"I would not have you alter your mode of education," said Mrs. Davidson; "for I think it very judicious."

"I do not think we shall, except for very good reasons," said Mrs. Eldridge. "We are governed by principle in the care of our children, and do not mind much about the gossip of the multitude in that regard."

"Did Miss Bemis hint that your children were not well behaved?" Mrs. Davidson asked.

"O, no; she said they were very promising children, and she wished every family of children was like them."

"Why, then, does she suggest that you alter in your mode of management? Perhaps if you did they would not be as promising as they now are," Mrs. Davidson remarked. "I should think she would be willing to have you go on in your usual course if she thought your children were more promising than those of others. I should think she was rather inconsistent."

"I thought so likewise," Mrs. Eldridge said; "and wondered at the time how she could wish us to do differently with our children, when she remarked every body said our daughters were little ladies and our sons little gentlemen."

"She is so ready to find fault and so eager to spread gossip, that I suppose she thought she must remark about your children, and make some suggestion to assist you in their education," Mrs. Davidson remarked.

"She had much to say about my not being more abroad

in the parish. She said people thought I ought to be out more visiting the families," Mrs. Eldridge said.

"Perhaps your *house* would be in *confusion* if you were visiting all the time; and, if such were the case, I have no doubt people would say you ought to stay at home and attend to your family," Mrs. Davidson remarked.

"That is all true," said Mrs. Eldridge. "I have no doubt, should I visit more than I now do. I should be under the necessity of neglecting my children and family; and then there would be a great hue and cry, and Miss Bemis would have more than her hands full of business. I told Miss Bemis that I visited all that I could, and always went when and where I thought my duty called, and that I intended to do this whilst I had health. I was pretty plain with her; and I do not think she will again allude to the subject. She has hinted to me often before that I did not go abroad in the parish enough; but I never said much in reply till to-day."

"I have often wondered," Mrs. Davidson said, "how you found time to visit as much as you did, seeing you had so much company and that your domestic cares were so numerous. I never hear people censure you for not visiting more, and I do not believe there are many who do. Miss Bemis may have heard some three or four persons say that you did not visit enough because you do not visit *them* more than others."

"I thought the same," said Mrs. Eldridge, "and told Miss Bemis that I was particular, as a general thing, to distribute my visits equally among all classes in the parish."

"Yes, I know you are," said Mrs. Davidson; "and sometimes I have felt sorry that you were so particular, because your visits at our house are so infrequent."

"If I visited any more often than others, I think there are the best of reasons why I should be frequently at

your house; for your favors to us have been unbounded, and your sympathy and encouragement unfailing."

"I do not know about that," said Mrs. Davidson. "We have always taken great pleasure in doing what we have for you and your family, and it would have afforded me greater pleasure if you had visited us oftener. I do not think you call at our house much oftener than you do at other places."

"I know I do not; and the reason is, as you know, that I wish to avoid every cause of complaint," Mrs. Eldridge said.

"Yes, I know it; and I suppose your course is proper. A minister and his wife must be prudent."

"O, yes, we know that; but I have often thought that it was impossible for a minister or his wife to be so prudent as to escape censure from some quarter. Why is it that a minister's wife should be censured when she does precisely the same things which another lady does who is much applauded for her conduct? Now, there are certain courses which I have taken in relation to certain matters which have been, I acknowledge, in imitation of *your* conduct, and I have very often heard *you* highly praised by the same individuals who, I am informed, have condemned *me* in no measured terms."

Mrs. Davidson, smiling, remarked, "I have often thought in astonishment of the same inconsistency, and could not explain it in any other way than by supposing that you were a public character, a sort of target mark, and that I was a private individual. People feel that a minister and his wife are somewhat their property, and are dependent on them. Thus they take liberties which would be condemned as exceedingly uncivil and uncourteous if practised towards others."

"I do not think there is any reason for such feeling," Mrs. Eldridge observed. "I do not know why we are

any more beholden to the people than the doctors are or the lawyers. My husband works as hard for the people as any doctor in the place or any lawyer, and yet does not receive half the compensation for his services which these gentlemen obtain. I never heard that the people ever hinted that Dr. Brown or Squire Morton were dependent on them, or that they could not live without them, or that their management or that of their wives was ever a subject of much conversation."

"I agree with you," Mrs. Davidson said, "that no doctor or lawyer in the place works so hard for the people as your husband, and that none receives so small a compensation as Mr. Eldridge does. You know people regard the *body* and the *will* with more esteem than they do the soul, and they are more ready to pay for services to the body than they are for those to the soul, and that they sometimes will sacrifice all to the gratification of the will. Somehow or other, people feel when they employ a doctor or a lawyer that they are dependent upon *them*, and not that the doctor or lawyer are beholden to them. But towards a minister the feeling of dependence is the other way."

"Yes, I think it is," Mrs. Eldridge replied. "I do not think that I am any more beholden to the people here than Mrs. Brown or Mrs. Morton are. I wonder if these ladies think they are dependent and must stop and think before they act to ascertain whether it will answer to do thus and so, just because their husbands happen to be one a doctor and the other a lawyer?"

"Of course they do not feel their dependence," said Mrs. Davidson. "I warrant you Mrs. Brown will do as she pleases for all the people here will say; and that Mrs. Morton, too, will not ask leave of any how to act."

"Well, now," Mrs. Eldridge asked, "why should my conduct be so much watched, and why should people be so free to speak of me and my actions, when they let Mrs.

Brown and Mrs. Morton go unscathed? The people pay Dr. Brown and Squire Morton, and they pay Mr. Eldridge. The doctor and lawyer make money; but my husband barely lives. I should really like to know why I should be *singled* out and shot at as I am."

"O, I do not know of any good reason, I confess," Mrs. Davidson remarked, "only that is the *fashion*. Ministers' wives, of late years, have had rather a hard lot; for my part, I pity them very much."

"They are deserving of commiseration, I think," Mrs. Eldridge replied; "for often, let *them* do as they may, — summon to their aid all the wisdom which can be commanded, — *they are sure to meet with censure and reproach from some quarter.*"

CHAPTER XXI.

VISIT OF MR. AND MRS. BANCROFT.

A SUDDEN change in the health of Mrs. Davidson having excited the apprehension of her friends that her days on earth would soon be finished, a messenger was despatched to her only surviving sister, Mrs. Bancroft, who resided in the State of New York, summoning her at once to the presence of the invalid. But a few days, therefore, elapsed after the receipt of this most melancholy intelligence before the affectionate sisters again were together, the one in the most anxious and assiduous care of the other, who was far reduced by disease.

In a few months later it had been the design of Mrs. Bancroft to visit the place of her birth and the scenes of her childhood and youth; for it had ever been her practice since her marriage to do this as often as once in a twelvemonth. Her attachments were exceedingly strong to her native hills and valleys; and, with these, her affection for the only sister she ever had made a motive altogether irresistible to overcome every hinderance which might interpose an annual journey thitherward. In the present instance of her leaving home there had been no pleasing anticipations as there formerly were for weeks before such a journey. But one idea was with her, and that engrossed every thought of her mind and absorbed every feeling of her heart. Her sister, *her only sister*, *sick* and *dying*, was

sufficient to keep her most thoughtful and sad. Upon her arrival, however, at the mansion of the squire, her melancholy forebodings were much relieved; for in Mrs. Davidson there had been an alteration for the better, and hope again existed in all the family that the period of her dissolution might not soon arrive.

A few days subsequent to the arrival of Mrs. Bancroft and her husband, as Mr. Eldridge had just left the chamber of the sick one, Mrs. Bancroft observed, —

"How differently you are situated in respect to a pastor, sister, from what we are! All here seem attached to the minister; and the minister appears to reciprocate the interest, and to be devoted to the highest interests of the people."

"We are highly favored in our pastor, I acknowledge," Mrs. Davidson replied. "Mr. Eldridge certainly is a most excellent man. I am sorry to know that you are not as fortunate in a pastor. Perhaps, however, it may be that your people are in fault, in not paying him those attentions which belong to a minister."

"I cannot think," said Mrs. Bancroft, "that our minister *knows how to appreciate* tender and devoted attentions from a people. He always appears to be looking after but one interest; and that is his own. I think, and others think, that he is a *very selfish man*."

"I am astonished, sister," said Mrs. Davidson, "to hear such a character given to Mr. Caldor. When I have met with him at your house I have been rather pleased with him."

"I know you were pleased with him," Mrs. Bancroft said, "as strangers are inclined to be. When you have been with us we did not care to disclose our feelings in regard to him and find fault with the minister; for we were aware of your very extreme repugnance at hearing a minister censured; and besides, we have been living in hope

that Mr. Caldor would become sensible of his inconsistencies, and reform. But now we have given up all hope of this."

"You feel then," said Mrs. Davidson, "that he can no longer be useful to you, I suppose?"

"Yes, I think Mr Caldor can do no more good in our parish. The council we had a few months since gave it as their opinion that it was best that he be dismissed."

"Ah, have you had a council?" Mrs. Davidson inquired.

"Yes; the people *at last* obtained the consent of Mr. Caldor to the calling of a council; but he told them he should not abide by the result unless it accorded with his judgment."

"He is somewhat independent, I should think," Mrs. Davidson said.

"He is a very *set* man," said the other. "He is not the man to be moved when he has once made up his mind. His contumacy has been very instrumental in increasing the dissatisfaction of our people with him. If any one differs from him and conscientiously acts in opposition to his views, he is sure to hear of it, and sooner or later to feel the effects of Mr. Caldor's displeasure."

"Such a trait of character," said Mrs. Davidson, "is not very becoming in a minister, I think."

"No, sister; it very ill becomes a minister to condemn every one who happens to disagree with him and to follow such a one with his wrathful treatment. This is the course which Mr. Caldor has long pursued, and it has been a powerful cause in bringing our people to their present feeling."

"Did it appear before the council," Mrs. Davidson inquired, "that Mr. Caldor was such a man as you represent?"

"Certainly it did," was the reply, "and that pretty fully too. The testimony was abundant that Mr. Caldor fol-

lowed such as walked not on his own line with his displeasure and improved every opportunity to do them an injury. Some of the council were utterly confounded with the disclosures which were made under this charge, and they were amazed that the people had borne with him as long as they had. It appeared that one man was turned out of the church because Mr. Caldor became angry with him for not quietly submitting to his arbitrary dictation."

"But how could this have been done?" Mrs. Davidson inquired.

"Our church have long been in a very sluggish state, you know," Mrs. Bancroft replied, "and withal have stood in fear of Mr. Caldor. They knew he would be a match for them if they contended with him; and so he has been allowed to do pretty much as he pleased. The brother who was cut off would not bow down to Mr. Caldor, and so at some private meeting of the church he was cut off."

"Were there no preliminary steps taken with this individual?" Mrs. Davidson asked.

"No; there were not. When he was excommunicated there were but a few present, and those were people who would not dare to do otherwise than as Mr. Caldor told them."

"I should have thought the brother would have appealed to a council," Mrs. Davidson suggested.

"He did request a mutual council; but Mr. Caldor so managed that the request was refused. The people, however, did not feel right about this; and, on the whole, more harm was done to Mr. Caldor than to any one else."

"I should think," Mrs. Davidson said, "conduct like this in a minister would be likely to excite a people."

"Yes, yes; it did our people, I assure you. They waked up at once after this," Mrs. Bancroft said, "and there was no backwardness in people's saying what they thought about Mr. Caldor. One would tell *this* and another *that;*

and so from different quarters there came a variety of reports of his conduct, which made him appear in a very unministerial position. There was, soon after this, a determination on the part of many to exert themselves and have him dismissed."

"What charges did they bring against him before the council?" Mrs. Davidson inquired.

"His being arbitrary and vindictive was one, and his being very penurious was another."

"Perhaps he was only provident and frugal, and not penurious," Mrs. Davidson said.

"O, but it came out most fully before the council," the sister exclaimed, "that he was exceedingly fond of money, and would do almost any thing to get it. It appeared that he had driven some of the very hardest of bargains, and that often with the poor of his flock. There being no cause for this, Mr. Caldor having a good farm, money at interest, and a good salary, his conduct appeared much more reprehensible. As a specimen of his love of money and of the meanness he often resorted to to get it, it was proved before the council that a poor neighbor of his went to him to buy a rooster, of which he had many large and fine ones. The pastor was very complaisant and ready for a bargain, and descanted largely upon the superiority of his poultry. A fowl having been selected by the neighbor and the price inquired, Mr. Caldor said, 'That's a noble fellow. It is not more than two months old, and I dare say he would weigh five pounds dressed. I will sell him to you for fifty cents; and if you can't pay for him now, you may take him home and keep him all winter, and return him in the spring.' The neighbor said he would not take him then, but would see about it, and let Mr. Caldor know in a few days what he would do. This conversation took place towards the close of a day in the month of September. In the evening a knocking

was heard at the door of this neighbor, and, on its being opened, lo and behold, there stood the pastor with the fowl under his arm! 'I have brought over the fowl,' he said. 'Mr. Bradly, he is rather *in my way;* he fights the others. You can keep him, and, any time you please, can pay me the half dollar.' The neighbor had concluded that he would not give such a price for the fowl, and was intending to have told his minister so when he next saw him; but, inasmuch as his reverence had brought him over in his own arms, he said, 'Very well, Mr. Caldor.' So he took the fowl. A few weeks after this Mr. Bradly went over to the minister's, and, after being there a while, he took out half a dollar and laid it upon the table by the side of which Mr. Caldor was sitting, and remarked, '*There is your rooster.*' 'O,' said his reverence, 'I can't let you have him for that; he is worth seventy-five cents. I sold three to-day smaller than yours for that sum.' Upon being reminded that this was the price agreed upon, Mr. Caldor said, '*If* I told you so, you can have it; but the fowl is worth more money.'"

"Do you say, sister, that it was proved before the council that Mr. Caldor was guilty of this meanness and dishonesty?"

"I do," the sister persisted; "and several other cases similar were proved too. It came out that Mr. Caldor had been in the habit of taking his wife and three small children and going abroad in the parish, spending a day here and one there, and being thus absent from his own house for three and four days in succession; and all this for *the mere purpose of saving.*"

"How could it be proved that this was his object? I should think it would be a difficult matter to prove this," Mrs. Davidson suggested.

"What other object could the man have," the sister said, "in being gone from home with his wife and children

from Monday afternoon till Friday morning, and that, too, very frequently in the course of the year? Besides, it was proved that *saving* was his object by a hired girl. This girl testified that she overheard Mr. Caldor say to his wife one day, 'My dear, I guess we'll go abroad in the parish next week and live on the people for a few days. Mary takes good care of the hogs and the cows when we are away; and you know she likes bread and milk, *and it saves considerable* when we are all away for three or four days.'"

"How happened it to be known that Mr. Caldor said this?" Mrs. Davidson inquired.

"The hired girl, Mary, told of it, to be sure," the sister replied. "She never liked it to be left alone so much with all the barn work to do; and she was vexed when she came to know what the reason was. After hearing this reason from the lips of Mr. Caldor himself, she made it known to some of the neighbors. The people had often wondered why the minister and his family were abroad so much in the parish, and many had said that they could think of no other reason than a desire to save; but then there was no proof of this until the disclosures of the hired girl."

"Well," said Mrs. Davidson, "if your minister is such a man as this, I can't blame the people for wishing him away."

"*He is just such a man*," was the reply; "and I hope there are few like him who preach the gospel."

"I think there are not many of this description," Mrs. Davidson said. "Our acquaintance with ministers is very large, you well know; and I am sure, as a general thing, they are sincere, worthy men, whose chief desire is to do good. I have often thought that a desire for money, for its own sake, existed more feebly in clergymen than in any other class of the community."

"That has always been my opinion," rejoined the sister; "and I think that Mr. Caldor's is one of the *rare* cases of ministerial misconduct. But then it is all true of him that I have now told; and I think he ought no longer to preach. If he were poor there would be some excuse for him; but he is not; he is richer than most of his people."

"I hope most sincerely," Mrs. Davidson continued, "that he will be influenced by the advice of the council and take himself off from your parish without further trouble."

"I am very much afraid that he will not," said Mrs. Bancroft. "He very well knows that he would stand but a small chance to be settled again; and he likes a six-hundred-dollar salary too well to relinquish it readily. But I am persuaded, if he stays, that he will have but a very few people to hear him preach. He may, however, take himself off. Should he do this at once the parish may be saved from ruin."

"But can he not be compelled to leave?" Mrs. Davidson asked.

"They say he is settled for life," was the reply; "and unless he can be impeached for immoral conduct, or change of sentiment, or neglect of duty, he cannot be dismissed against his consent. That was in the contract at the time of his settlement."

"I should say that he might be impeached for immoral conduct," Mrs. Davidson suggested.

"So some of the council thought," the sister said; "and I believe there are those among the people who intend to resort to this course if he will not leave soon."

"I cannot understand how a minister can be willing to preach to a people who has the opinion of him which you say is held by your parish respecting Mr. Caldor," Mrs.

Davidson said. "Most clergymen would retire at once upon the discovery of any very general dissatisfaction, no matter whether there was any reason for it or not. I have often thought that they were too much inclined to leave their people upon very slight appearances of dissatisfaction among them. I have supposed ministers often erred in thinking their people were tired of them without cause."

"I have no doubt of this, sister, myself. I think, and have often heard the opinion expressed by others, that ministers were too sensitive and too suspicious. I have known instances of ministers leaving good situations, thinking that their people were anxious for a change. There was Mr. Parsons, who was settled about fifteen miles from us, who left his people because he imagined they were dissatisfied. They did not know at the time that this was the reason; and they were much pained when convinced that such was the fact. They thought much of him, and never thought that he was not a very useful minister among them."

"I have no doubt that ministers often err in this respect," said Mrs. Davidson. "They see things frequently through a diseased brain, brought on by much study and anxiety. I think a people ought to take especial pains to guard their pastor against such a feeling, which might be easily done. Let them often call upon the pastor and speak words of cheer to him — speak of his sermons and his other labors, to encourage him. How easily this might be done! Let them, too, make him or his family a present occasionally — no matter if it be ever so small and trifling, if a larger one be not convenient and practicable. 'A gift,' you know, 'pacifieth wrath;' and certainly a gift might have equal effect in removing despondency and in sending encouragement to a pastor's heart."

"Yes, sister; what you say is all true. Not long since I went a short journey, and stopped over the Sabbath with a friend of ours, a Mr. Branch, who is settled over a large church. I remember very well hearing him say to his wife that he wished he might hear something from his preaching. I asked him if he never heard any thing from it. 'No,' he said; he did not remember ever to have heard any allusion made to his sermons more than once or twice since he had been settled. He remarked that he considered it very singular that, as often as he met his people in private, they should be so silent in relation to his labors. He said it would do him good to hear from his preaching; he should be encouraged, be inspired with confidence, if he knew that his people were satisfied with his preaching."

"That is just what I think," said Mrs. Davidson. "A minister is greatly encouraged when he hears his people speak favorably of his labors. He feels that he is not laboring in vain. I think a people err often in being negligent in this respect. A little more consideration on their part might show them the usefulness and importance of their encouraging their pastor. Should they do this, and pay him kind attentions, they might be paid a hundred fold. People are ready enough to talk to their minister about his sermons and other labors when he is first settled and does not need encouraging. I would have them as communicative ever afterwards. We all like to feel that we are successful in what we undertake; and it must be gratifying to a clergyman to hear from his people evidence that he is useful. I am acquainted with no better way for a minister to have this evidence than for his people to speak to him occasionally about his sermons."

"Yes, sister; if a *people wish for a good minister, the best*

way is for them to be good themselves. They must treat him kindly and considerately. If they do this, and have not such a man as our Mr. Caldor for a pastor, I am persuaded they will be rewarded for all their pains and trouble."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REQUEST.

It accorded well with the feelings of Mr. Eldridge that an invitation was given him to preach the sermon at an ordination of a friend who was to be settled about ninety miles distant from him; for, at the period when this invitation came, he was exhausted by his multifarious pastoral labors, and longed for a journey to recruit him. He therefore willingly consented to perform the service, and left his family and parish towards the close of the week preceding the Wednesday on which the ordination was to occur. He left thus early that he might pass a few days with a much-esteemed clerical friend, who lived about fifteen miles this side the town which was to terminate his journey.

In his visit at this friend's, conversation was directed, as was perfectly natural that it should be, to the situation of ministers at the present day and as it had been for a number of past years. In the progress of this conversation the pastor of the place incidentally alluded to a letter which had lately been put into his hands by one of his most prominent parishioners, with a desire for his opinion on the *request* which it contained. This letter was from a son who had received a liberal education, had passed through a regular theological course, and entered the ministry, in which he had been blessed for nine years,

serving two churches successively in the pastoral office. In point of ability and general acceptableness as a preacher he was far above the ordinary class. He had his own ideas of propriety, and could not well be happy or contented in a situation where such views could not be realized and enjoyed. Because this was not his condition in his first charge he sought and obtained a release from it, thinking he *might*, among another people, be differently situated. Such was his popularity as a preacher, he found it no difficult matter soon to secure an invitation from another parish; and the compensation being more than that usually given out of our cities for ministerial services, he concluded to accept the invitation, and was accordingly installed. Among this people he had lived four years at the time he wrote the letter to his father to which allusion has been made, and was happy in their confidence and esteem; yet here he found that his own ideas of propriety were not met, and it was his serious purpose to leave.

The letter was read to Mr. Eldridge, and it was as follows:—

"My dear Father: From what I said to you when you were here six months since, the impression was probably made on your mind that we were not happy and contented here, and for reasons somewhat similar to those which occasioned my first dismission. In my first settlement, I had a salary, as you remember, of five hundred dollars. I soon found, as you are aware, that such a sum was wholly inadequate to a comfortable living and yet meet those *other calls* made upon me from my library and the benevolent societies of the age. Were I not a minister and expected to be an example to the flock of benevolence, and to have all things upon and about me fair and comely, and expected, too, not to resort to other ways than my regular salary for the means of enabling

the people to realize their expectations, were I a farmer or a mechanic, I doubt not I could live comfortably on five hundred dollars, and perhaps put by a hundred on interest. But being a minister, I could not, as you know I did not, live on five hundred dollars in one of the five years of my first settlement; and it was for this reason only that I sought a dismission. When I was invited to settle where I am now located, and offered one thousand dollars salary, I judged I might fulfil my desires and duty on that amount; but I have not been able. The expenses of living here are great; the expectations of the people of the style in which their minister is to live are great; and a *thousand dollars here go no further* towards answering the many calls made upon the pastor than five hundred did in my former settlement. Had I no more family now than I had then, I could not live and do as I am expected to do on the salary I now have. Now, I am *troubled*, and *have long been troubled*, to know what course to pursue. My people think they pay a large salary; and so they do, if a large salary be more than what most ministers in the country receive. But, then, it is not a salary sufficient to enable a minister to *maintain the position in society which is assigned him by the people*. Here is my trouble. People assign a minister a position which the salary they give him will not enable him to keep; whereas he ought to have a *larger* salary than his position demands to be able to provide against a season of disability to preach by reason of sickness and age; as the community now feel a minister cannot be backward in any benevolent effort without incurring the charge of meanness, nor can he be economical and save a portion of his salary without an exposure to the charge of being avaricious. I have neighbors about me, whose income has never been a thousand dollars a year, who are comparatively wealthy; but if the minister had attempted to follow their way of becoming rich he would have been

most severely frowned upon. I am tired of drawing on you and on my wife's father for money from year to year to help in maintaining my position in society; and both myself and wife have made up our minds that it is no longer duty. My wife's father was here lately, and we had a long talk upon the subject. He sympathizes with us, and is willing to assist us in living here, and would prefer thus to do than to have us leave. We told him how we felt in relation to being supported in any other way than from our own exertions, and that we had made up our mind no longer to be from year to year dependent on the bounty of our relatives. At last I disclosed to him my plan, which I will now submit to you.

"When I first proposed to you the idea I had of trying to obtain a collegiate education, you may remember that you did not fully fall in with me; that you said you intended that I should have the Holmes Place, which you thought would afford me the means of obtaining a handsome livelihood and perhaps more than that. Well, that place is not sold yet, and I have thought I would apply for it now. I think I could live if I had it, and not suffer so much as I now do from being pinched as I am in living on a scale not of my own making, which I am not able to sustain with the means now afforded me by the people. I cannot hope for an increased salary, nor that the people will be less moderate in their expectations. I do not like to live where I cannot be *more independent* in the management of my affairs than I can in the ministry in the present state of popular feeling. A minister, ordinarily, is not permitted to graduate his expenses according to his own estimate of his ability. His people or the ruling spirits among them *must do this work for him;* and, whilst the means of living according to such graduation are withheld, I cannot longer, with a good conscience, submit. I think the influence is pernicious. If now, my dear father,

you think favorable of this plan of mine, and will let me have the Holmes Place, I shall abandon the pastoral office and seek a living from the cultivation of the soil. You know I always was a good farmer; and I think I can succeed well now in the business. My wife's father generously offered to give us two thousand dollars to repair the house and stock the farm.

"Should I do this and leave the pastoral office, it is not my intention to abandon the ministry. Far from this. I could supply feeble churches for what they were able to pay, and I doubt not could make myself useful in preaching. This I should aim to accomplish. I am hoping to be with you in a few weeks, when we can confer together."

"There is much truth in that letter," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "and many considerations deserving profound attention, I confess; but I do not know that a minister would be justified in leaving the pastoral office for the reasons set forth in this letter. I should wish to think and pray much over the matter before I came to such a decision."

"The brother who wrote this letter, I can assure you, is no ordinary man," Mr. Pearson remarked. "He is far above mediocrity as a preacher, and has always manifested a spirit of the most fervent piety and devotedness to his profession. I never knew any thing of the feeling this letter discloses until I read it. I supposed my young friend was happy and contented in his work."

"I know the amount a *minister* receives for his compensation does not answer the same purpose for the benefit of his family which the same sum would accomplish for *almost any other family* in the parish," Mr. Eldridge observed. "He is expected to do more for the public in various ways than other men; and he must regulate his expenses with his eye on the accommodation and good of

others. It is expected that a minister will always entertain a certain class of strangers who happen to be in the parish; and then he must lead off, often, if not always, subscriptions for all the benevolent objects of the day; whereas, if he were in private life, he could make his own selection of the objects of his charity, or, if he judged it duty, withhold giving altogether. Besides, his own dress and that of his family must be more expensive; and, indeed, all his family expenses are necessarily more than what they would be if he was not the minister of the parish and expected to please every body."

"This subject," remarked Mr. Pearson, "enlarges the more it is considered, I confess. I do not know as I ever thought so much of it until lately; and I really think our churches do not realize as they might and should the difference between the *expenses* incident to the support of a *minister's* family and position in life and those of a *private* citizen. All the agents who plead the cause of our benevolent societies, of course, make the minister's house their home; and then, again, if they would succeed well in their different objects, the minister must head the subscription paper. He must do all this if he has not paid for his last suit of clothes or for his winter's wood; and so he is subjected to great anxiety in relation to such expenses, and meets them only by the most rigid economy."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Eldridge; "it must be acknowledged a minister has a hard time of it at the best, let his salary be what it may. A people will *find some way to make it not worth so much to him* as the same amount would be were he in private life."

"I have been thinking," remarked Mr. Pearson, "of going to visit the father of the young man who wrote this letter, after dinner to-day, and would be pleased to have you accompany me. Perhaps from us both he may be able to obtain some satisfaction as to his duty in relation

to the request of his son. It may be the son is there; and if so, we shall have an opportunity of learning from him more of his own trials."

After dinner the two gentlemen proceeded to the house of Mr. Mosely, which was a ride of about two miles. Having reached the place and entered the house, they were very cordially welcomed by Mrs. Mosely and her daughters, and soon by Mr. Mosely himself, who was summoned from the field to be gratified and entertained by a visit from his pastor and clerical friend. After indulging a while in general conversation, Mr. Mosely, addressing Mr. Pearson, inquired what he thought of the letter from his son.

"I have attentively read the letter," Mr. Pearson remarked, "and must confess there is too much reason for the feeling which prompted your son to write it; yet I cannot bear to think that he must leave the pastoral office."

"I don't want him to do this," replied the father; "it tries me very much; but I think there is some ground for his being dissatisfied with the manner in which he is obliged to lay out his salary, unless he has more than at present."

"Have you heard from him lately?" Mr. Pearson inquired.

"He is at home," was the reply. "He arrived yesterday, but is now gone to the village. We expect him back, however, very soon."

"Does he seem to be persuaded to follow out the plan detailed in the letter?" Mr. Eldridge asked.

"I should think he did," Mr. Mosely answered. "He says he cannot live any longer and be supported by *charity*, or feel that he cannot expend his earnings after the promptings of his own judgment, and be ruled by the caprice and pride of a people."

"Then you have decided to accede to his wishes," Mr. Pearson remarked, "and we shall have him among us?"

"Yes," Mr. Mosely replied. "If he really thinks it best I shall gratify him, and let him have the Holmes Place. There, he has come, I believe," rising and looking out of the window at the carriage approaching the house.

Mr. Mosely, the son, soon made his appearance in the parlor, where this conversation was going on; and, after the usual inquiries and salutations, he remarked, —

"I don't know, Mr. Pearson, but that you will have some new parishioners soon."

"Yes," said the latter; "from what has been said since I came in, I have thought it probable; but I do not know as I ought to have *just such* parishioners as it is intimated I may have."

"*Dismissed ministers*, they say, make bad parishioners, I know," said the young clergyman; "but if I come home to live, I hope there will be no trouble from me."

"O, I did not make my last remark," Mr. Pearson said, "because I apprehended any trouble from the family who contemplate occupying the Holmes Place, I assure you. I have no doubt both our parish and myself would be much advantaged by such an accession to our number. I am not yet fully persuaded that duty would be done if Mr. *Mosely should become a parishioner*."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Mosely, "I have thought very much on this subject, and have most sincerely and painfully regretted the necessity of such a step, but have about made up my mind to take it. To live as I have lived since I have been settled in the ministry I cannot any longer, and so I *must live* if I continue a pastor; for I do not think I could effect any difference in public sentiment in relation to the compensation of ministers which would bring me any relief. Now, I have what is called a large salary — one thousand dollars a year. I know it is

difficult to make people believe that I cannot live handsomely on that sum; but I have tried to live, and have not been able to make the two ends of the year meet. Now, I will tell you how my money goes. My house rent is two hundred and fifty dollars. I am obliged to keep two girls, whom I pay two hundred and fifty more, besides their board. My parish being large and out of the village, somewhat scattered, places me under the necessity of keeping a horse, and that costs me one hundred and fifty dollars more; so my house, hired help, and horse cost me six hundred and fifty dollars: then there are but *three hundred and fifty dollars left* for food, clothing, books, and incidental expenses. Now, you may ask, 'Why have such an expensive house, and why keep two girls?' I will tell you. My people, or the ruling spirits among them, REQUIRE me to live where I do; and the house being large, more help is required to keep it in order. My wife must be a *lady*, or the parish would rebel; she must visit and be ready to receive calls; and so two girls are absolutely needed. The second year after I was settled in my present place I resolved that I would take a *cheaper* house, and thus reduce my rent and other expenses. I partly engaged a suitable house about a mile out of the village, where I could have been contented and happy; but when it came to be *known* that I was thinking of moving there, there was such a *clamor* about it from certain quarters that I and my best friends thought it would *not be prudent* to move. Had I gone there, I could have *saved* all of *three hundred dollars annually.*"

"If such be the expenditures you are obliged to make from year to year," Mr. Eldridge observed, "for house, help, and a horse, I do not see how you could meet the other calls made upon you with three hundred and fifty dollars; and I do not think I should feel very comfortable in being under the necessity of *calling upon relations* to make up to

me the amount needed to make the two ends of the year meet. I should want my people to understand the matter; and perhaps they would either give more salary or be willing to have me live within that they now pay."

"Well," Mr. Mosely said, "a people are governed by *custom* in offering a salary to a minister. Most ministers have about the same amount which is paid in their community, and regard is not had so much to the *necessities* of a pastor's family as to custom. A religious society would not be willing to pay less to a minister than what other religious societies of their own ability in the neighborhood pay; nor would one be very likely to advance much on what their neighbors give. There ought to be taken into account the *difference* of expenses between living in one parish or another; but such difference is apt to be overlooked; and it is thought that, *because a neighboring minister gets along well* on a certain sum, another minister might do the same in a parish where the expenses of living are *double*, arising from the habits of the people among whom he lives in part. I have talked with my people on the subject, and they say when I *talk* with them it *ought not so* to be; that I ought to have *more* salary; but somehow or other it is difficult to bring them to feel so intensely on the subject as to induce them in their *parish* capacity to act. *Talking in the parlor or in private, private sympathy with a pastor*, is a very *different* thing from a *parish vote* to relieve a pastor. My people, whilst they say to me privately that my present salary is insufficient, would *not in parish meeting say this*. Should I ask more salary, I might possibly get it; but then it would be the occasion of ill feeling that might lurk secretly in the bosoms of the people for a while, and in a few years be the means of an open rupture. I shall not ask for an increase of salary. I think I must leave my people, and thus leave, too, the pastoral office."

"I do not like the plan of asking for an increase of salary," Mr. Pearson remarked. "In ninety cases out of a hundred *it is disastrous;* and as brother Mosely says, whilst people *privately* say what they now pay is insufficient, yet they would not *raise their hands* and advocate earnestly in *parish* meeting for an increase of salary. I do not know how to reconcile the expression of private sympathy from parishioners towards a pastor with inactivity in their parish capacity to afford relief, unless it be that the parish think the pastor will *some way or other elbow his way out of his embarrassments.*"

"That's it, father Pearson," said Mr. Mosely. "Now, my people think that *I shall elbow* my way out as I have always done, with the *help of my father and my wife's father;* and here is the *sore place.* I cannot bear it; and it is my duty to prevent it. I do not think a parish ought to be encouraged in having their minister supported by his friends who live out of the parish. There is brother Parker, settled near me among a people who are abundantly able to support him handsomely; and yet they think that, because his wife has *rich friends* in Boston and New York who make them many valuable presents, it is *no matter* if they do not pay him more than four hundred dollars a year, and even that sum most reluctantly and tardily. I am tired and sick of these things, and I really think our churches ought to be brought by some means or other to alter and to do very differently."

"Well, how would you effect the revolution you desire?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"You see *what I am intending to do,*" Mr. Mosely replied. "I would have these churches who will not pay a pastor a sufficient sum to enable him to live *go without a pastor*, be compelled to go without a pastor, until they are ready to do their duty. Now, my people pay me

enough, provided they would *allow me* to expend my salary as *they* would expend a thousand dollars a year."

As this remark was finished some new company was introduced, and further conversation on this topic was interrupted. It may be remarked, however, that the Holmes Place was fitted up and handsomely stocked with all needful implements of a well-cared-for farm, and that the Rev. Mr. Mosely there happily lived, meeting all the expenses of his numerous family from its productions. A weak and worthy parish in the neighborhood for a long time had his ministrations, till, through the strength derived from his wisdom and care, with the blessing of God upon his labors, they were able to sustain a pastor. Though not in the pastoral office, the ministry of Mr. Mosely continues useful and acceptable.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MODEL PARISH.

Whilst Mr. Eldridge was passing a vacation at the west his good wife and children were making a visit to the place of her nativity, the home of her parents. Whilst there she received a letter from one of her female friends proposing to her an excursion of about fifty-five miles, and promising to introduce her to a parish which would afford her real pleasure. This parish had often been described in the correspondence which had for many years existed between the two friends, and Mrs. Little had frequently intimated to Mrs. Eldridge that she hoped one day to have it in her power to visit there in her company. The incumbent of the pastoral office in this parish was an uncle of Mrs. Little's, and had been settled something like forty years, enjoying the pleasing satisfaction of ministering to the spiritual necessities of his people from divine truth and of witnessing many full and extensive harvests. So much had been written to her of this parish that Mrs. Eldridge had a strong desire to visit it; and though the invitation to do so now came to her when she was alike absent from her husband and their home, yet she could not find it in her heart to deny herself the pleasure of responding favorably to the offer; and she accordingly wrote to Mrs. Little that she would gladly avail herself of her generous proposal and be in readiness to meet her at the depot, a

few miles from her father's residence, on the day she specified. Accordingly, the next week, on the appointed day, Mrs. Eldridge was accompanied by her father to the place where the cars would bring Mr. and Mrs. Little on their way to the abode of the honored pastor and the respected and beloved uncle in whose family and from whose people great pleasure had often been experienced in days that were gone. After waiting at the depot about half an hour, the iron horse was seen at a distance on the road that had but a few years been opened in the long woods of pine, and soon he came up with mighty majesty, and at length stopped for wood, water, and passengers. The train had hardly stopped before Mr. Little was on the depot platform by the side of Mrs. Eldridge and her father, with a smiling face and ready hands, to assist a most valued friend of his wife to a seat in the cars which had been kept vacant for her occupancy, in close proximity to Mrs. Little, that they might at once enter on that pleasure, long anticipated, which friends strongly attached always *experience* when they meet after a long separation. The baggage was quickly located in its appropriate place, the aged father's hand was quickly pressed, a good by was hastily uttered, "All aboard!" was quickly shouted, and then the iron horse was off, and with lightning speed was soon beyond the reach of the old man's vision.

As soon as the conversation began to run on quiet themes, after the many incidentals to a sudden meeting of old friends, Mrs. Eldridge remarked, —

"I hardly know what my husband will say when he finds me absent from my father's."

"When is he expected there?" Mrs. Little inquired.

"This week, Saturday," Mrs. Eldridge replied. "I should have written and informed him of this excursion had I known where he was; but, as he was unsettled which course to take when he last wrote, I did not know

where to direct a letter with any certainty that it would find him. I left a letter for him at father's, explaining my position, and saying that I should not be absent more than four or five days."

Mrs. Little smiled and said, —

"I rather think your husband will have to wait longer than that before he will have the pleasure of seeing his wife. We intend staying at uncle's ten days or a fortnight."

At this remark Mrs. Eldridge was overtaken with painful surprise, and quickly said, —

"I cannot *possibly* remain so long. Husband's vacation is up in three weeks, and he wished to return home by the way of New York city and stop and see some friends on the route. Besides, there are a number of places in the vicinity of father's where we intended to visit; and it will be impossible for me to be absent for ten days now."

"Perhaps you may think it best to remain with us," Mrs. Little remarked. "We want to have you do so, for we think you would never regret it. Your husband, I guess, would not object to a week's addition to his vacation. It is so terrible hot he won't do much before the middle of September."

"O, but he engaged to be at home on the first Sabbath in next month," Mrs. Eldridge said. "The committee only provided for the supply of his pulpit till that time."

"Well, my good friend," Mrs. Little said, "when we get to uncle's and find that we cannot spare you for a fortnight, I will write to a young minister of my acquaintance and engage him to supply your husband's pulpit at *my* expense till he returns."

This kind offer somewhat relieved the anxiety of Mrs. Eldridge, and she thought that it might not be attended with any serious consequences if one or two weeks were added to her husband's absence, *provided* the parish did not

have to bear the expense of supplying the pulpit. Indeed, Mr. Eldridge had intimated to some of his people that, if any thing should detain him into the month of September, he would arrange himself for the supply of his desk.

The mind of Mrs. Eldridge being thus relieved of its anxiety, she soon found herself in animated conversation with her friends on various themes that naturally came up both from past associations and events, and objects which were of more recent date. The country, too, through which they were passing brought her in contact with many places where lived friends both to herself and Mrs. Little ; and conversation naturally ran at times in relation to these individuals. After a ride of about two hours and a half in the cars their mode of conveyance was changed to a stage coach, in which they proceeded about nine miles, to the residence of Mrs. Little's uncle. This place they reached about five o'clock in the afternoon, and were most cordially welcomed both by the uncle and aunt as well as by the cousins.

As these visitors entered the house and were proceeding to the parlor, the eye of Mrs. Eldridge observed in the opposite room a new roll of carpeting half spread on the floor, and one or two ladies anxiously looking on as if in perplexity how to arrange the figures so as to have the carpet well and properly cut. She thought the one that was already on the floor was a very comely covering, and it was a matter of a little wonderment to her that a new carpet was thought to be necessary. However, it was but a passing thought, as such thoughts on other people's concerns will come unbidden at times and are soon forgotten. Mrs. Eldridge soon found herself seated in a very hospitable family and surrounded by those who sought to make her happy.

At the tea table, which was surrounded in about an hour after their arrival, Mrs. Little, who sat at the right

hand of her aunt Howe, in a whisper remarked to her relative, —

"I see a piece of carpeting in the corner of the room. *You* wear out carpets as well as other people, don't you, aunt?"

"O, yes," the good lady audibly replied; "but then we are not now in need of a new carpet for this room."

A little blackeyed girl of about seven years, who sat next to Mrs. Little, a granddaughter of Mrs. Howe, with a blushing cheek and a most interested countenance, quickly remarked, —

"That carpet is a present. The carpet that is on this room is going to be put on grandpa's new study floor."

All at the table were now fully informed of another act of generosity of the people of the parish, when Mr. Howe proceeded to give his friends a little further account.

"You know, Mary," he said, turning to Mrs. Little, "that I have for a number of years been thinking of building a study at the south-east corner of our house; and this summer I have accomplished my long-cherished plan. It was completed about a week since. Before it was done, some of the good ladies here whispered to your aunt that, if it would be agreeable, some of our friends in the parish would like to do something about furnishing it. So they came and talked over the matter here, and finally concluded, as the carpet on this room had been in wear about two years, they would remove it to the study and put a new one in its place. So this morning a valuable new carpet was sent in, and this afternoon several ladies have been in to cut and make it."

"Your people hold out yet, it seems, in their kind and generous acts," Mr. Little observed.

"I wish my people had a better minister," Mr. Howe replied; "for a better parish cannot be found."

As the remark was finished the door bell rang, and Mr.

Howe was called to the parlor. He however quickly returned, followed by a brother clergyman of a neighboring parish, who was soon seated with the family at the table.

The afternoon following the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Little, at six o'clock, was the weekly prayer meeting in the vestry by the side of the meeting house, that stood on the common, directly in front of the parsonage. It was a most pleasant act on the part of their visitors to accept the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Howe to accompany them to this hallowed place. Whilst they were participating in these services a most joyful surprise entered the hearts of these occasional guests. Such surprise, in part, was excited by the large number in attendance and by the readiness of the brethren to take part in the exercises, and the intelligence and piety they manifested whilst thus doing. So deeply were they impressed with this uncommon spectacle that they could not resist the inclination to make it the subject of many inquiries and pass many encomiums on their return to the parsonage.

When they were all seated in the parlor, Mrs. Eldridge with great interest asked Mr. Howe, —

"Do you always have so full an attendance at your weekly prayer meetings?"

"In pleasant weather there are always as many, and often a much larger number out," Mr. Howe replied.

"It speaks well for the people, I confess," Mrs. Eldridge remarked, "to be so much interested in these meetings."

"I think it does," Mr. Howe observed. "It is a great source of encouragement to me."

"O, it must be," said Mrs. Eldridge; "it must encourage and comfort you very much."

"My people are a very good people, and I have reason to bless God for sending me here," Mr. Howe remarked.

"I could wish that many parishes might follow their example. Were it followed, there would doubtless be more fervent piety in our churches and greater stability in our ministry. It would not, moreover, be a difficult matter to follow such an example, if the members of our churches were interested as they ought to be in the great things of eternity."

"They must find it difficult sometimes, I should think, to be present," Mrs. Eldridge observed.

"Undoubtedly they do," Mr. Howe said; "but not so difficult as one might at first suppose. The members of our church know that it is a fixed fact that there will be a weekly prayer meeting, and they generally know and feel that it is their most sacred duty to be present. I believe they wish to be present. Accordingly, they *arrange their business* so as not to have it interfere with the prayer meeting. Many of our brethren follow marketing at a neighboring village, where there are many factories. Some are obliged to go every day. But, then, those who are under obligation to send produce every day contrive on the day of our prayer meeting to be at home in *season* to come to the vestry; and others, who are not obliged to go every day, arrange it so that they will not go down *the day of our meeting.*"

Whilst Mr. Howe was thus speaking a smile might be seen on the very interested countenance of Mr. Little, who improved the first opportunity to remark, —

"I think it would do one of our deacons good to come and pass a little time here; do you not, wife?"

"O husband, I would not reflect on any of our friends at home," Mrs. Little remarked.

"Well," Mr. Little said, "I do like to see consistency of conduct, and I think the people here manifest this, and I thought one of our deacons might be profited by passing a few weeks up here."

"How so?" Mr. Howe inquired.

"We have a deacon," Mr. Little observed, "who gave very good evidence of piety and was for a number of years a very engaged Christian; but latterly he is very much troubled with a *diseased stomach*, so much so as to be unable to be punctual in his attendance on prayer meetings — and on Sabbath services, for that matter. He works hard, is out in all weathers; and if there happens to be an auction, or any other gathering, on the day of a prayer meeting, his diseased stomach is not apt to be in the way of his being present; but, somehow or other, his disorder works curiously at about the hour of prayer meeting; he has to lie by then; he can hardly stir. If, however, his business calls him ten or twelve miles from home the next day, — no matter if he must be at this distance by sunrise, — he is sure to be there. He gets pretty well worn down by *Saturday night*, and his disorder is very apt to be violent on the *Sabbath;* so that he is not at church more than half the time. I really think, if he could only come up here and inhale *this atmosphere*, he might soon be an *altered man*. I wish he would; for he is wanted down our way for a deacon, and, if his *health* was good, he might do extensive good."

"Does this deacon excuse himself from attending your prayer meetings and on the Sabbath by alleging his diseased stomach, when he will not allow such reason to detain him from his business?" Mr. Howe inquired.

"O, sometimes, when business is not very driving, he is troubled with his disease," Mr. Little said; "but it is amusing to see how convenient it is for him to have this disease when we have our prayer meetings and on Sundays. I have no doubt the deacon is somewhat diseased; but, then, if he was *now* what he *once* was, he would not let his disease detain him from our religious meetings if he could attend to his *business*."

"I think," Mr. Howe observed, "Christians should mani-

fest their piety, should show a difference from the people of the world; and I know of no better way for them to do this than by honoring God in his sanctuary, and by their engagedness in calling upon him at the throne of grace. If professors are what they ought to be, they will forego their own interest for the sake of spending an hour together during the week in seeking God's blessing on their church and ministry and on a world lying in wickedness. I do not think there are many in our church who would enjoy themselves much in being absent from our prayer meetings or from Sabbath services, unless they were prevented in the providence of God from being present. The great interest which the members of our church have in these meetings is a marked peculiarity in their character."

"If your deacon is really uninterested in religious meetings, as I should judge he was from his being able to attend to his business in all weathers notwithstanding his diseased stomach," Mrs. Howe observed, "I should think his influence would be disastrous in your parish."

"Well, it really is," Mrs. Little said. "The other deacon is very aged and infirm, and is unable to go from home much; and therefore we have, as it were, but one deacon; and to have him so worldly is a serious evil. He is looked up to for an example; and, because he is so infrequent at our prayer meetings, other brethren justify themselves in being absent; and the consequence is, we have a very small attendance, and such meetings exist only in name."

A few days from this conversation, as Mrs. Eldridge was alone in the parlor, with the entry door ajar, she heard Mrs. Howe remark to a little girl whom she was accompanying to the door, —

"Give my love to your mother, and tell her I am very much obliged to her for her present, and hope we are very grateful to her, and to your father likewise, for all their kindness."

Entering the room, then, where Mrs. Eldridge was sitting, Mrs. Howe said, —

"Look here, Mrs. Eldridge, and see the valuable present I have just received!"

"That is a present indeed," Mrs. Eldridge said. "What very nice silk! It must have cost a dollar and a quarter a yard. It will make a fine dress. You seem to be highly favored with such attentions from your people."

"Yes, we are," Mrs. Howe observed. "We have a very kind and considerate people. It is very seldom that we have to purchase any article of dress. The ladies are very attentive to me, and the gentlemen look out well for Mr. Howe. I believe he has not purchased but one suit of clothes for twenty years. His hats, and cloaks, and other garments all come in as this piece of silk has; and it makes a great difference in our salary, I assure you."

"O, it must," Mrs. Eldridge observed. "It must save you a hundred and fifty or two hundred dollars a year."

"That is what we have thought," Mrs. Howe said; "and then our children have been pretty much all clothed with presents from the people. There are few such parishes as ours, Mrs. Eldridge."

"So I have long thought," Mrs. Eldridge observed, "from what Mrs. Little has often informed me of your people; and, since I have been here, I have thought '*the half had not been told me.*' I should think you had presents almost every day."

"We do have them very often. The truth is, I believe *almost every family* in the parish mean to give us something *every year;* the very poorest send some trifling expression of their regard; but, then, we always more than make it up to such parishioners. It is very *pleasant*, however, to have them *disposed* to remember us."

"I should like to have it so," Mrs. Eldridge said. "Presents coming from families in different parts of the

parish furnish much *encouragement* to a minister, inasmuch as they indicate a good state of feeling; and, you know, ministers are very sensitive creatures; they like to have their people feel kindly towards them, for then they can be more instrumental of good."

"I wonder people *don't think more of this* than they do," Mrs. Howe observed. "It is truly a great encouragement to a pastor to know and feel that his people all regard him with affection; and then, again, how very much they might relieve him by doing as our people do — send him from time to time such things as they can spare *without feeling it in the least*, and which would save the minister many dollars in the course of the year!"

"O, you do not mean to say that people could send such a present as you have just received without feeling it?" Mrs. Eldridge said.

"O, no, indeed. People in general could not do so; but the *family* from which *this* dress came don't feel such a present. They are rich, and Mr. Hanson is making money very fast. But, then, our *farmers* could send *a little butter*, or potatoes, and such like, you know, and not feel what they sent in the least. Now, our people do so. We have beef and pork, apples, potatoes, &c., sent in from different families; and in the course of the year it amounts to much, I assure you."

"How much is your husband's salary?" Mrs. Eldridge inquired.

"Mr. Howe was settled, you know, about forty years ago, with a salary of six hundred dollars; and this is his present salary; but, then, times have changed since, and expenses of living are much larger. Our people feel this, and would have raised the salary ten or fifteen years ago; but Mr. Howe thought it would not be best, and has discouraged it. The people told him they were able to pay more and were willing to do so, and, if they were called

to settle a *successor*, should expect to pay two or three hundred dollars more; but husband said he had rather not have his salary raised. He was satisfied with what he received. I suppose he has the more presents by reason of this, as our people do not mean to have it said that parishes around us who are settling new ministers pay more than they do. I have no doubt that we receive as good as ten hundred dollars a year."

"Well, I suppose," Mrs. Eldridge said, "if your husband should be taken away, your people would have to pay a salary of a thousand dollars."

"O, yes; *that is what they say;* and they *do not feel like paying Mr. Howe less* than what they would have to pay a young man."

"I admire this trait in the character of your people," Mrs. Eldridge said. "Now, I know several parishes who pride themselves on *saving three or four hundred dollars a year* because their ministers were settled some years ago, when salaries were not so *high* as they are *at present;* and I think it is shameful in them."

"It is, truly," Mrs. Howe said. "When pastors have grown gray in the service of a people they ought to be well cared for and treated as *generously* as they would treat a young man. Our people would not be guilty of such meanness, I know. At any rate, they are not."

During the visit of Mrs. Eldridge she took occasion to inquire of Mr. Howe if the waters of his parish always ran smoothly; if there had not been sometimes tumultuous waves.

"I have a very *considerate people*, madam," the good man replied, "and to their *candor* and *good sense* I am indebted for uncommon quietude in my ministry thus far. Had I been in *some parishes* I have no doubt my course would have been *very uneven*, and it is probable I should have been dismissed twice or thrice. There have been times

when clouds have darkened my horizon; but they have stood but for a moment. I have always had parishioners who acted from principle and were guided by intelligence and the spirit of the gospel. They have seen *failures* in me, and have *apologized* for them to *those* who would have made use of them to my great disadvantage. The *leading* characters in the parish have felt that ministers were but *men;* and they have always been disposed to put a *favorable* construction upon my conduct, and to *hold me up* when any *restless spirits have attempted to bring me down.* The fact is, the great body of my people, Mrs. Eldridge, have no manner of sympathy with that spirit which exists in so many parishes at the present day that leads to such frequent dismission of ministers. They think it is wrong, that it is wicked, and that it is ruinous both to parishes and ministers. They feel that a people ought to *bear* and *forbear* in their treatment of pastors, and that *there is no other way* of getting along this side heaven, seeing all men, *ministers* as well as others, *are frail and imperfect.* They *know* that they *cannot* have a *perfect minister*, and they are *wise* enough *not to make the attempt after such.*"

"The more I become acquainted with the history and character of your people," Mrs. Eldridge said, "the more I discover to admire and commend. I think they deserve a premium for having discovered *that there are no perfect ministers, and for not trying to obtain what they know they cannot find.*"

"That is a great thing to know, and to feel, and to be governed by; there are no perfect ministers," Mr. Howe said. "The ministry is committed to earthen vessels. No doubt ministers might be better than they are, — for one, I feel that I ought to be much better than I am, — but they are but men, and people ought to regard them as entitled to the *same* candid consideration which is accorded to *other men.*

"If our parishes would thus regard ministers," Mrs. Eldridge observed, "how much better it would be for them! and how much more good might be accomplished by ministers, to say nothing of the pleasure and peace ministers would then enjoy! Now, people know that there is no perfection this side heaven; they know they cannot have a perfect minister; and it is *strange* that they will *attempt to obtain one.* I know a number of parishes who within the last *twenty* years have dismissed several most excellent ministers, *as good men as are to be found*, as talented, as eloquent, as learned; and the reason was, that they saw *some things* in them which did not exactly suit; and so they turned them off, *expecting* to be *better pleased;* but they *have not bettered themselves yet;* and the probability is, some of them will be rent to pieces whilst contending about what makes a perfect minister; for you know there is a *difference* of opinion on this *point.*"

"But you know," —— Mr. Howe was proceeding, but was interrupted by the entrance of his wife with a letter for Mrs. Eldridge, who, upon seeing the superscription, exclaimed, "*This* is from my husband!" Craving permission to read it, the further conversation was suspended.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LETTER.

THE epistle which was put into Mrs. Eldridge's hands, and that interrupted the conversation detailed in the preceding chapter, was from her beloved husband. The main object of this letter was to convey to her the most melancholy intelligence that their firm and steadfast friend Mrs. Davidson was just lingering on the borders of time, with the expectation of her friends that every day would introduce her to the eternal world. Mr. Eldridge, therefore, wished her to excuse his waiting at her father's for her return, as he should leave at once for the scene of his pastoral duties, that he might be once more with one who had been to him such a valued friend, and do all that he could to comfort the dying saint and administer consolation to her afflicted family.

Mrs. Eldridge could no longer enjoy herself away from her husband and the scene where were those sorrows which had gathered in the mansion of the squire. She hastened her return to her father's, and from thence to her own home, and was but two days behind her husband in arriving there. It was, however, too late to see the living Mrs. Davidson. Her last enemy had conquered the evening preceding the noon when Mrs. Eldridge arrived at home; and Death had her cold and emaciated, in readiness for the tomb.

More severe grief could hardly have torn both Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge had an own parent been thus despoiled of earthly existence; for from the friend who had lately left them they had for years most constantly received the warmest, tenderest expressions of friendship and love. A stranger, on entering the parlor where was the venerable squire, bowed down in the dust by the loss he was bemoaning, with his sons and daughters, all of whom had been allowed to meet in the chamber of a dying mother, and Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge, would have found it difficult to distinguish any difference in the grief in those stricken hearts. Probably there was not much difference; for all were bound to the dead most firmly. Affection, we know, when it is true and real, hath cords as strong as those of Nature's creation; and surely none ever doubted the genuineness of the love in both Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge for the departed friend or her honored companion.

When the last offices of affection had been rendered and the grave had received another token of its power,— when the mourners began again to look after the affairs of earth after having had their attention completely absorbed by the things which are not of this world,— Mr. Eldridge took the letters which had accumulated in his absence, and began their perusal. There was *one* among them which made a deep impression on his mind, and drew from him the greatest attention; for it touched on a theme that ever interested the *friend* who had lately been called away, and upon which *she* never was too feeble or fatigued to dwell; viz., the trials of a gospel minister. This letter was from a clerical friend who had been settled in Mr. Eldridge's vicinity about seven years, in which he gave the unpleasant information that he was about asking a dismission.

This information was no more unpleasant than it was surprising; for Mr. Eldridge had supposed that his friend was ardently attached to his people and that they were

happily united in love and affection to him. He could not brook the consideration that the tie that bound them together should be severed; and, moreover, he was not ready to have one held so dear by himself leave his own vicinity and go where their intimacy would be interrupted, if not entirely broken off. He sat an hour or more in his study contemplating the subject, and at last concluded that he would, in the afternoon, ride over to the parish of Mr. Bertram, and, if possible, prevent his carrying into execution his plan of leaving. Accordingly, Mr. Eldridge, after dinner, made his way to his valued friend, whom he found at home, and with his request for a dismission already written, to be communicated to his people on the following Sabbath.

"I am happy to find that you have not presented your request," Mr. Eldridge remarked; "and I think you must secede from your determination to do so, at least for the present. I have come over to *prevent* your leaving, if I can. Now, tell me what has transpired to induce you to think of doing so."

"I have always determined that I would not remain among my people," Mr. Bertram replied, "after I ascertained that there was any dissatisfaction with me; and I have within a few weeks discovered that there is uneasiness here, and so I shall take myself off."

"What have you heard against you?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"O, I have not heard any thing very particular. It has been pretty strongly hinted, however, that the people would like a new minister."

"*Hinted!*" said Mr. Eldridge. "By whom? Has Deacon Brown or Colonel Lowe said any thing like this to you?"

"O, no. I have not changed a word with them on the subject. I have not seen many of our people of late; for I supposed what I had heard to be true, and I did not care

about conversing on the subject, as I have made up my mind to leave."

"Well, you have heard from some one that the people desired a new minister, you say; and I wish you would inform me from whom you had the information."

"I have no objection to telling you," said Mr. Bertram. "About three weeks ago Mr. Peabody and Mr. Cady called in to see me, as they said, for the purpose of conversing upon the state of the church and parish. I readily entered into conversation with them on the subject, supposing they had some plan on foot for the accomplishment of good here, and in which they wished my coöperation. I soon found, however, that they came to inform me that my services as pastor were unacceptable, and that it would be pleasing to the people if I would in *a quiet way* take myself off. They said they supposed I was not aware of the state of feeling towards me; that they felt that I ought to be apprised of it; and that it was the *duty* of some to make me acquainted with the facts in the case. They said it was a very *painful* subject to talk upon, and that they had *hesitated* long before coming to see me in relation to it; but at last their *consciences* would not allow them to be longer silent, and so they came this evening to discharge their duty. I asked them what was alleged against me. They said, *nothing in particular.* The people *all liked* me very much *as a man;* but they should be better pleased and edified with a different minister. This was the substance of all they said, although they were here talking about two hours."

"Well, you say you have never conversed on the subject with any of your people, and are yet intending to ask for a dismission?" Mr. Eldridge remarked.

"Yes; I have had no wish to talk about my matters with my people. If they are dissatisfied with me, I am ready to leave," Mr. Bertram said.

"Have you any objection to *my seeing* a few of the people and making them acquainted with the state of your present feeling?"

"No, not that I know of; but I should prefer that you would not. I am not very particular about it, however, as they will all know it on the Sabbath."

Mr. Eldridge, being well acquainted in the parish, was induced by his deep interest in Mr. Bertram to move with considerable energy among his people, that he might become acquainted with the state of feeling towards their pastor, and, if possible, prevent his being dismissed. He first called on Deacon Brown, who lived near the parsonage. After the first salutations were over, he began by inquiring after the condition of Mr. Bertram. He soon found that the deacon was wholly ignorant of any dissatisfaction with the pastor, and, when told of the present state of Mr. Bertram's feelings, was greatly surprised and exasperated at the cause.

"I have supposed," said the deacon, "all of our people were *very much attached* to Mr. Bertram; and I really believe they are."

"He thinks there is dissatisfaction, and has his request for a dismission already written, and is designing to present it next Sabbath," Mr. Eldridge observed.

"*He must not*," the deacon said. "It will not do. Mr. Bertram has been deceived — has been grossly misinformed."

"Well, deacon, I wish you would get into the carriage with me, and we will call on some few individuals. If there is any uneasiness here, we can soon discover it, I think."

The deacon was ready at once to join Mr. Eldridge in such a mission. They accordingly passed about among the people, and found the leading characters in the parish in the same ignorance of a desire for a change of ministry

as the deacon was. One individual who lived near Mr. Peabody's, whilst expressing his hot displeasure *at this plan*, this *infamous plan*, to effect the dismission of a most valuable pastor, as he expressed himself, remarked, —

"I now understand what Mr. Cady and Mr. Peabody have been up to of late. I have seen them together almost every day for a number of weeks past, and I could not imagine what their particular business was; but now *it is all out*. I rather think they will find themselves ashore this time without any cargo."

When Mr. Eldridge and the deacon had satisfied themselves that Mr. Bertram had been greatly deceived and grossly misinformed in relation to the state of feeling towards him in the parish, they returned to his house and let him know the result of their investigations.

"*Can it be possible*," Mr. Bertram said, after having heard the many expressions of confidence and esteem which had been repeated to him from his people by both Mr. Eldridge and the deacon, — "can it be possible that Mr. Peabody and Mr. Cady would come here and tell me the great body of the people were desirous of a new minister, when you say there is hardly an individual besides them but would mourn at my departure? I confess I am astonished."

"I don't see," the deacon said, "how these brethren could have told you what they did. They must have known to the contrary, I think. Well, it is pretty certain that *they* would like to have you go away."

"Yes," said Mr. Eldridge; "there can be no doubt of that; and *it was a plan of theirs* to effect Mr. Bertram's dismission."

"Well," said the deacon, "I am glad we found it out as we did, before Mr. Bertram had presented his request; for I never like to have a minister ask for a dismission. There is always some unpleasant consequence or other from it."

"I thought," Mr. Eldridge said, "that brother Bertram ought not to leave. I could not bear to have him do so. I could not bring my mind to the belief that it was necessary that he should leave; and so I came over to prevent it if possible."

"We shall all be under great obligations to you," Deacon Brown observed, "for coming over and manifesting the interest you have. It would have been unfortunate if our first knowledge of dissatisfaction with our pastor had come to us in his request for a dismission. I do not think he would have got his dismission; but he might if he was not so much liked, however. I have heard of a minister's asking for a dismission in consequence of the efforts of one or two individuals upon him, when his people were not dreaming of his leaving them, who was dismissed without much trouble."

"How was that?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"O," said the deacon, "the people of this minister were rather a stupid set, and they did not have *interest enough in ministers' matters* to turn out to the parish meeting; and so a *few*, four or five, did the whole business, and he was dismissed. If he had not asked for a dismission he might have died among his people; for they never would have turned him away if there had been a good reason. But there was no reason whatever for his dismission. The people said they liked him *well enough;* but, if he wanted to go, he might for all them. Most of the people in the parish did not know for some time after he was dismissed that he had been *induced* to ask for a dismission by the representation *that he was not popular with the people.*"

"Ministers are very sensitive creatures," Mr. Eldridge remarked; "and one or two crafty parishioners may take advantage of this weakness and easily effect the dismission of a minister. They can tell him that his people don't like him; he will believe it, and treat them with

coldness, and so make enemies. I have known several instances of pastors being dismissed in this way. Ministers ought not to hear every wind that blows. When they have evidence that any are dissatisfied with them, *they ought not to show this knowledge in coldness, or indifference, or hard speeches.* If they alter any in their conduct, they should be *more attentive* to the individuals opposed, more conciliating. The fire would often go out and contention and animosity cease. I have known one or two ministers, who have grown old in the service of their people, who would have been dismissed long ago if they had *asked* for a dismission. Frequently have they been *waited* on by individuals and been told that a new minister would be acceptable to the people; but they maintained their temper all the while, and never let it be known by the least whisper or the least variation of their kind treatment to any that they had heard that any dissatisfaction existed towards them."

"How could such pastors do good if the people wished them to leave?" Mr. Bertram inquired.

"There was nothing which could be brought against them," Mr. Eldridge said. "They are good preachers and consistent men; but they are not great men. Some of their people thought, as the parishes had greatly increased in consequence of railroads which run through them and of manufacturing which had been introduced, that they ought to have ministers who were more eloquent and popular. They knew they could not effect the dismission of these ministers if they were disposed to stay; and so they resorted to the contemptible course of waiting on them and telling them how this and that individual felt towards them, hoping to *work* on their *feelings* and induce them to seek a dismission. But these ministers were both of them very prudent and good men; and they received all these interpositions of busybodies with meekness, and

never made any stir, but continued on in their old way; and are now, and ever have been, very much respected and very useful. They don't believe that a fluctuating ministry is a useful ministry. They are convinced that fastidiousness in a people is a great sin and has produced great evil in parishes; and, from principle, they will not encourage it by any conduct of theirs."

"They are right," the deacon said; "and I wish there were more like them. I wish ministers would not be so sensitive — that they would bear and forbear, and outlive the little tempests that will come up in parishes. They might easily do it if they would but endure the sacrifice of feeling; and, should they, the effects on their ministry would be most happy."

Much of this conversation was had as Mr. Eldridge stood, with hat in hand, waiting to return home; and it was late in the evening before he could release himself. At length he departed, with many thanks from Mr. Bertram and his deacon for the very friendly interest he had manifested in their welfare as pastor and people.

By the time he arrived home all lights were extinguished in the houses around, and but one burned feebly in his own abode; for it was almost midnight. To his great delight he ascertained that a most valued brother in the ministry and his wife, who lived remotely from him, were their guests, having reached the place about two hours after he had left on his visit to Mr. Bertram. The next morning at the breakfast table he gave an account of this visit, which elicited from all expressions of wonder that so much mischief to a minister might be wrought by one or two *designing, crafty* men in a parish. Mr. Cook, the friend and brother above alluded to, remarked that this case reminded him of an instance of ministerial dismission which was lately effected in his neighborhood through the wily conduct of a collector of the salary. This collector

was opposed to the minister, but veiled his opposition so artfully that it was not manifest till it had accomplished its end and the minister was dismissed. In the course of his travels around the parish he was in the habit of representing the *prosperous* condition of the pastor's *financial* concerns, and of remarking that *he probably did not wish to have his people put themselves to any inconvenience* to make out his salary. Credit was accordingly given to his sayings by many who really had so many calls for money in the economical support of their families that the stipend they felt bound to pay their minister was assuredly felt to be a tax. Yet they paid it cheerfully heretofore because they considered it a just debt, and would have been willing to have sacrificed more rather than have had their pastor in the least straitened ; for he was well beloved by his people. They were dilatory in paying *only* because the collector had represented that there was no want of the money, and *not* because of any *unwillingness* to maintain their minister. After the collector had gone over the parish and paid into the treasury what he had received, it was discovered that the salary fell short more than a hundred dollars. When asked for information on the subject, he remarked that he could not account for the falling off *in any other way* than by supposing that the people were becoming *tired* of their minister. This declaration astonished both the treasurer and parish committee, who were unwilling to believe that such was the fact. They talked much on the subject, and each one remarked that *no* rumor of dissatisfaction with the pastor had reached *them*, and they thought that there must be some other reason. They closely interrogated the collector as to his faithfulness in calling upon all, and were replied to that he had seen every individual in the parish and requested all to pay. The committee and treasurer all knew that the want of the money would be *seriously* felt by the pastor, as they knew

he was *depending* upon *every dollar* to enable him to keep out of debt, which was to him a very sore evil. Moreover, they said, if our pastor should know that there was a falling off in the payment of his salary, the effect would be very great upon him. Being all of them well off in the world and of generous dispositions, and having strong attachment to their pastor, they concluded that they would say nothing about the deficiency to any one, and would make it up from their own pockets, which they did; and the salary was fully and promptly paid. The committee, however, were disturbed; and they agreed that they would, as occasion might offer, sound the people, and ascertain if there was any root of bitterness springing up among them towards their pastor.

In the course of a few months, as the committee and treasurer were in session, the subject came up again, and each one reported that they had not found any who were seriously opposed to the minister, and were happy in the conclusion that the pastor stood high in the estimation of the people. No suspicion having arisen in the minds of any that the *collector* was an *enemy* to the pastor, he was chosen the second year; and when he finished up the work of this year it was found that a larger amount was wanting to complete the salary than the last year revealed. The collector appeared *grieved* at the fact, as he said, but was led to believe that the people were really intending to give the minister a gentle hint that it was time for him to be seeking another home. The committee were greatly tried, and were led to believe that such might be the case. They were troubled what to do, as they knew the pastor was expecting his salary; and they were inclined to think that, if the people were becoming tired of him, it was important that he should be apprised of the fact. They concluded that they would not make up the deficiency then, but would pay the pastor what had been collected;

which was done accordingly. As they supposed, the pastor was sorely disappointed ; but from none of the committee did he obtain any clew to the reason. The pastor, soon after pay day, met the collector and inquired of him the cause for the deficiency. The collector was glad of the opportunity of informing him, and told him that he supposed the people were withholding his salary to *convey* to him the information that his services were no longer wanted. The pastor was taken altogether by surprise, and was greatly overcome with sadness and perplexity. He had not dreamed of such a thing ; for he had discovered no abatement of affection or confidence in his people. However, being a man of nerve and energy, he soon rose above it all, and for a few weeks was absent from his people. When he returned he brought with him a call to another pastorate. He speedily announced the fact to his people and requested a dismission. The people were taken by surprise ; for they all loved their pastor. He was beset from all quarters for the reasons of his conduct, which he frankly gave them, when their indignation became great at the course pursued by the collector. The deficiency of his salary was only a matter of convenience to some of the people, and *not* an *indication* of disaffection or indifference to the pastor. They were ready to make it all up, and *more*, if he would withdraw his request and remain among them ; but this he could not do ; for he had virtually sought the call he had received, and felt in honor bound to accept it. He persisted in his request, and was dismissed ; and the collector had to leave the place with the curses of the people resting upon him.

"Well," said Mr. Eldridge, "all this goes to show *what one or two men* in a parish can do with a minister. I wonder people don't learn something by such facts as these."

"They ought to learn ; but they are rather slow at improvement, after all," Mr. Hartwell observed. "I rather

think, however, the people of whom I have just spoken will be pretty careful who they put in as collector again."

"A parish ought to be careful about this," Mr. Eldridge said; "for a minister's good is in the collector's hands. If he is a friend to the pastor and a man of energy, he can put up the people to promptness and liberality in the payment of the salary; and no man ought to be a collector *who is not the minister's friend*, and a wise and prudent man too; for when he goes round after the salary he must of necessity hear the people talk. They will talk at such times, and say things which they don't mean often; and the collector ought to be such a man as will give a right turn to conversation and maintain the pastor's side."

"Yes; that is true," Mr. Hartwell observed. "I know when you feel in the pockets of people you touch them; and a collector has it in his power to do a minister vast good or much injury at these times. He can often fan a flame or put it out."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DIFFERENCE

It is well to contemplate the clerical profession in contrast with the other learned professions, together with our merchants, farmers, mechanics, railroad and manufacturing agents, and even with some of our common day operatives. The contrast may disclose a spirit, not by all readily accorded to them, which is the ruling, absorbing influence over those who enter the ministry, both in electing the profession and in continuing in it. This contrast may show how self is set aside, and what are the sacrifices made by our clergy of the wealth, and honors, and ease of the present world.

A social interview between Mr. Eldridge and one of his early acquaintance who visited him may present this contrast. The two were natives of the same town, were neighbors, schoolfellows, and had contracted for each other, when children, a friendship which was not forgotten when they were men. Though many years had rolled by since their last interview, and though their spheres of action were very dissimilar, yet both were pleased at meeting again, and were made happy in a retrospection of former scenes and pursuits and in a remembrance of old acquaintances and friends. Though Mr. Brayton was a blacksmith and Mr. Eldridge a clergyman and scholar, yet they met as equals, and together talked and laughed about

other days with great satisfaction. The former had a strong mind, which had been kept informed of all the general subjects of the day; and it was with much pleasure that the latter often discovered in his friend rather unusual acquaintance with men and things, which denoted that the anvil had been left at times for the library, and that the head must have labored hard as well as the hands. It came out in the course of the visit that Mr. Brayton had by his own exertions acquired a handsome property and that he was living in rather princely style. As he was incidentally speaking of his affairs, thereby disclosing the above fact, Mr. Eldridge unconsciously remarked, —

"How differently circumstanced we are, friend Brayton! You probably are worth fifty thousand dollars, and I have not three thousand. It cost me between one and two thousand dollars to start in my profession, and you probably but three or four hundred. I have worked hard all my days and have just obtained my bread, and you have acquired a fortune."

"You know," Mr. Brayton observed, "your profession is not a moneymaking concern. The men who enter the ministry, I suppose, do not care to be rich."

"Well, but why should they not be as well paid for their labors as other men are?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"They ought to be, I confess," said Mr. Brayton; "yet, somehow or other, people think, if they can only keep *life* in a minister and his family, that is all they ought to do."

"I know this is apt to be the feeling of a parish. The expenses of a minister's family are graduated on the most economical scale, and then the salary is voted him accordingly. Well, so it is; and yet, for all that, I would not give up my profession," Mr. Eldridge remarked. "There is a higher consideration than money or any thing earthly, I hope, which moved me to enter the ministry or to continue in it.

"How does the Bragg family make out?" Mr. Eldridge inquired. "I have hardly heard from them since we were at school."

Mr. Brayton remarked that there were "but two of the boys living, three having died before becoming of age. One is a carpenter and the other is a farmer; and both are very likely men, and are wealthy too."

"How is that George Hale? Is he living?" Mr. Eldridge asked.

"O, yes," Mr. Brayton replied, "and is a flourishing merchant in Buffalo. They say he is worth two hundred thousand dollars. We did not think he was very promising when we went to school together, did we?"

"He was about the dullest scholar I ever knew," Mr. Eldridge said. "You know the teachers lost all their patience with him. Well, I am astonished if he has made out so well."

After inquiring in this manner after his early friends, playmates, and schoolfellows, and having a favorable account of most of them who survived to manhood, Mr. Eldridge again alluded to the great difference there was between his own temporal condition and theirs, and yet it was done in such a manner as to leave no impression on the mind of Mr. Brayton that he repined at his lot or regretted that he had entered the ministry.

"Well, Mr. Eldridge," said Mr. Brayton, "we have been over the ground pretty well with our early friends. I should like to know how your college friends have turned out. I have some acquaintance with college matters, you know, as my oldest son has been through, and he has had much to say about things there."

"O, yes," said Mr. Eldridge; "I should like to compare their history now, seeing we are on the subject." So, taking the triennial catalogue, he turned to the years of his connection with college, and went over the names of both his

own classmates and of the members of the other classes who were with him there, and remarked on the history of each one, so far as he knew, of his own class. The one who had the highest honor at graduation was a respectable country minister. The one who had the second honor was himself; the one who had the third was dead. He found one classmate a judge of the supreme court of his native state, and remarked, "He is rich as a Jew." He found two who had been in Congress, and he believed were wealthy. He found seven who were ministers now living with a bare competency as a salary; five who were ministers had deceased. He found several were physicians and merchants, and most of them were well off in the world.

"It seems all but the ministers have got along well," Mr. Brayton remarked.

"Yes, it does," Mr. Eldridge replied. "There is Sanders, the fag end of our class: I am told that he is a very wealthy man at the west. He studied law, and for a while had an office; but he gave up his profession and went to speculating in lands, by which course he has amassed a large fortune."

"If *you* had turned your attention to law rather than theology, I suppose you would have been as wealthy as any of your old friends by this time," Mr. Brayton remarked.

"Very likely," Mr. Eldridge replied; "but, had I been *assured* of this, I presume it would have made no difference in my course. I felt called on to devote myself to the ministry, and I have no reason now to regret my course."

"You expect your reward in another world, I presume," Mr. Brayton observed.

"Of course I hope to be approved at last as a servant of my Savior, though I feel that I have been very unfaithful. If I should reach heaven and find that I had been the means of turning some of my fellow-beings to the Lamb

of God who taketh away sin, I think the reward will be great for all that I have suffered here in my ministry."

"Well, I acknowledge that it would; but then I do not see why ministers in our country, where the people are all able to do well by them, are not more considered, and have not a compensation more like that which lawyers and physicians obtain," Mr. Brayton said. "The great mass of the people acknowledge the ministry to be more important to their temporal welfare than the legal or the medical profession and they feel that to their eternal interest the ministry is indispensable. I should think, therefore, they would better provide for the ministers than they do, and not have such a wide difference in their temporal circumstances from those who are around them. I am sure ministers would do good with money, and I feel that they ought to have it."

"I agree with you," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "that a people should so provide for their minister as to enable him to have money at command; for by so doing he could be more useful in many ways. He would be free from *anxiety* which now often cripples him; and he would be enabled to set a good example to others in the use of money. Furthermore, the great difference of which we have been speaking between a minister's worldly circumstances and others would be done away, and doubtless many would enter the ministry who now turn from it because it is regarded as so poorly provided for, and as the sure way for great anxiety, sacrifice, and suffering. I really wish our churches might be induced to look into the subject, and then I feel that there might be a change for the better. I know of no reason why a minister of a parish should not receive as much from the people as a lawyer or physician. Yet they do not ordinarily receive half as much."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PASTOR CALLED TO A PROFESSORSHIP.

Several times during the ministry of Mr. Eldridge there were extended to him semi-official invitations to leave the people of his charge and occupy pulpits which the fashion of this world would characterize as more popular and eligible than his own. But to all such soundings on the part of parish committees and others he gave no encouragement, as his views ever had been partial to a *settled* and *permanent ministry*, and strongly opposed to a fluctuating one. He was peculiarly sensitive on this subject, having seen the *deplorable consequences*, both to ministers and churches, that follow dismissions for reasons other than those which were not insurmountable, and most obviously indicative that it was the will of the great Head of the church that such dismissions should take place. Whenever he was on councils for the settlement of pastors he would oppose with all his energy the introduction of the seeds of dissolution of the relation he was invited to aid in consummating, as he frequently found them in the "three or six months' notice" of either party which might desire a change. So successful was he in his opposition to these ways of settlement that in more than one instance did the people who had inserted such a clause in their pastor's call pledge themselves before the council that it should be rescinded, and no conditions

whatever attach to the settlement other than those fixed by law and sanctioned by ecclesiastical usage.

Although Mr. Eldridge might have left for a more extensive charge, and where the emoluments of his office would have been much enlarged, yet his people were kept in ignorance of these matters. He did not care to have them disturbed nor his own time and feelings engrossed with discussions in relation to such considerations. As the overtures to him from abroad were privately tendered, so his decisions were rendered in silence; and thus all tumult and inquisitiveness were saved.

After he had been settled seventeen years he received an invitation to a vacant professorship in one of our theological institutions. So well adapted was he to this office, and so much more useful might he be in it, that it was taken for granted that he would see as others saw and accept the situation. The announcement of the appointment was made in the papers; so that the people of his parish heard of it almost as soon as the mail which brought the invitation to Mr. Eldridge arrived in town. Of course there was commotion in all parts of the parish, and every little circle might be heard discussing the probabilities of their pastor's leaving, and variously expressing their feelings in relation to the call.

So far as public rumor had it, Mr. Eldridge stood at this period of his ministry as high among his people as at any former time. If animosity or dislike existed in any breast towards him, it lay there smothered and concealed. It was not known that any desired a change of ministry; and, from the manner in which the pastor's recent invitation to a professorship was received, it might have been inferred that all the people were satisfied with him still and anxious to retain him in their service.

A large party was assembled at the house of Doctor Howard soon after this appointment, and it was made the subject of very free discussion there.

"Are we to lose our pastor?" Mrs. Jones inquired of Mrs. Clay.

"I hope not, most assuredly," was the reply. "I hope and trust Mr. Eldridge will not think of leaving us. Do you feel as though he would, Mrs. Jones?"

"I don't know," she replied. "I hope he will not; but I am afraid he will. The situation to which he is invited would afford him such a large field of usefulness, and would enable him to be so entirely devoted to study, that I have thought he might be disposed to leave here for the sake of being situated more to his mind."

"How can you think so?" Mrs. Clay asked, in an excited manner. "I have not thought it *possible* that Mr. Eldridge could leave us."

"Have you heard that he was going to leave us?" Mrs. Parker inquired.

"O, no, I have not," Mrs. Clay said; "I have hardly heard a word on the subject till I came here this evening. Mrs. Jones just said that she thought there were strong inducements in the situation to which Mr. Eldridge had been invited to persuade him to accept his appointment."

"O, I thought I heard Mrs. Jones say that he would leave; and I thought I would draw up to you and inquire more particularly about it."

"No; I did not say that he *would* leave, but that I *feared* he might," Mrs. Jones observed.

"I hope he will not," Mrs. Parker remarked. "It would be a great misfortune to us were he to do so. I can't think he would be any more pleasantly situated any where than in his present place. The people are all ardently attached to him, and he understands them very well, and can do more good here, I am persuaded, than any one else."

"That is the way I feel," said Mrs. Clay. "You know it takes time to become thoroughly acquainted with a

people ; and now, as Mr. Eldridge has been here so long and knows all about us, he is better qualified to be useful to all classes than any other minister could be. The people, you know, love and respect him ; and when a minister has gained the confidence of a people he can do great good to them."

"That is true," Mrs. Jones said ; "and I hope our pastor will feel so, and remain with us."

"O, it would not be right for Mr. Eldridge to go away after having been here so long," Mrs. Parker said ; "and I don't believe he will go. He is *opposed* to ministers' leaving their people, you know."

"Yes," said Mrs. Jones, "he has said a great deal about such practices, I know ; but then there may be sufficient reasons for a pastor's being dismissed."

Mrs. Clay, finding Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Parker in animated discussion of the question, rose and took a vacant seat by the side of Mrs. Smith, who was very grateful for having an opportunity to converse with her upon the now absorbing subject.

"Mr. Eldridge won't leave us, will he, Mrs. Clay?"

"I cannot think he will," Mrs. Clay replied. "I have not heard any thing said about it before I came here. Indeed, I have not seen any one since the news came till this afternoon ; but I don't believe Mr. Eldridge will go away."

"That is right," Mrs. Smith said. "I feel just as you do. I have hardly thought of any thing else since I heard of his appointment. It would kill me if he should go. I tell my husband the parish would be ruined if Mr. Eldridge should be dismissed."

"Does the deacon think there is any probability of Mr. Eldridge's accepting the offer?" Mrs. Clay asked.

"No ; he does not. He says he cannot leave us ; the *people* would not *submit* to it."

"Has your husband heard much said about it?" Mrs. Clay inquired.

"O, yes; almost every one who comes to the mill talks to him about it. He was up in town here yesterday, and he said he did not know as he should be able to get home and do his business, there were so many stopping him to talk with him about our pastor."

"Do you know how *Colonel Presbury* feels on the subject?" Mrs. Clay asked.

"No, I do not. Mr. Smith said that he saw him yesterday with several others, but he did not know as he opened his mouth on the subject."

"I did not know but that he might be willing to have him go," Mrs. Clay said. "You know he felt pretty badly about being taxed to pay the parish debt some years ago, and I have thought he has felt differently towards Mr. Eldridge ever since; for, you know, he was the means of having that old debt paid."

"I know he was," Mrs. Smith said; "and it was a capital thing for the parish too. My husband every now and then speaks of it, and says Mr. Eldridge did a good thing when he preached that debt sermon. I know Colonel Presbury felt rather sour about being taxed; but, then, he said the debt ought to be paid."

"Yes, I know he said so; but, then, he was for selling the parish lands, and paying it with the proceeds," Mrs. Clay said; "and because the lands were not sold and a tax was made he did not like it at all, and he said hard things about Mr. Eldridge."

"Ah, I never heard of that," Mrs. Smith said. "If I did I have forgotten it, it is so long since the debt was paid. Colonel Presbury always speaks well of Mr. Eldridge when I see him."

"O, yes, I know he does," Mrs. Clay said; "but, then, *he don't forget being taxed so round'y.*"

"O, well," Mrs. Smith remarked, "he has not laid up any thing against our minister, I dare say; he has too much good sense for that, I know."

Mrs. Howard passing along, Mrs. Clay remarked, —

"I am sorry not to see your father here to-night, Frances. I was expecting to have a good chat with him."

"We urged him to come out," Mrs. Howard said; "but he don't care about being in such a crowd as we have here. He has not been out much in company since mother died. He says he prefers being at home."

"He has no fears that Mr. Eldridge will go away, I presume?"

"O, no; he was in here this morning, and said that he did not believe Mr. Eldridge had the most distant thought of leaving."

"Has your father had any conversation with him on the subject?" Mrs. Clay inquired.

"No. I think he said he had not exchanged a word with Mr. Eldridge on the subject."

"Well, *he* would have said something to him about it if he had any idea of leaving, I know," Mrs. Smith said; "for Mr. Eldridge always consults the squire, you know, on every subject; don't he, Mrs. Clay?"

"I have thought so," Mrs. Clay replied; "but perhaps he may yet."

"What does your husband say about Mr. Eldridge's leaving?" Mrs. Smith inquired. "He is about so much he would be likely to hear what is said in the parish."

"He says he shall be glad when the matter is settled, for every one is asking him so many questions about it," Mrs. Howard remarked.

"He don't find any who wish to have him go, does he?" said Mrs. Smith.

"O, I do not know as he does," Mrs. Howard replied; "but perhaps there are some for all that. They would

not *dare* to say so to *him*, you know, if they were opposed to Mr. Eldridge."

"No," said Mrs. Clay. "People would be very careful not to let any of your family know if they disliked our pastor. Indeed, it would not be very politic for such to let their feelings be known *to any one*, Mr. Eldridge has so many friends."

"I see, Mrs. Clay," Mrs. Smith said, "you are inclined to believe that there may be some who would be glad to have Mr. Eldridge leave."

"O, I do not know how you could make any such inference," said Mrs. Clay.

"You seem to think Colonel Presbury don't feel as he formerly did, do you not?"

"O, I think, as I said, that he was displeased about the old parish debt, and I think he has never got over it; and if he thought *it would answer, and he could succeed, he would exert himself to have Mr. Eldridge go away.*"

"I never heard any one say before that there was a single individual in the parish of any consequence who would like a new minister," Mrs. Smith said, with great warmth. "I don't believe Colonel Presbury does. If he could be the means of having Mr. Eldridge dismissed, I do not think he would use his influence for it."

"I hope he would not; but perhaps *time may show*," said Mrs. Clay. "Mr. Clay has said for years that Colonel Presbury *never would forgive* our pastor for that debt sermon, and that *he would one day make it the occasion of trouble.*"

"I am astonished," Mrs. Smith said. "If I thought the colonel felt so towards Mr. Eldridge I should cross him out of my books. I cannot believe that he does."

"O, well, I hope he does not," said Mrs. Clay. "I would not say any thing about it to any one. I should not have spoken to you as I have in relation to it had I

not supposed you would keep it a secret. I have never spoken of it before only to Mr. Howard's mother. She felt just as I do, and I have no doubt the squire does likewise; Mrs. Davidson said that he did. Colonel Presbury is a man of very strong prejudices, Mrs. Davidson used to say. He never forgets."

"If he feels as you fear that he does, how could he have acted as he has?" Mrs. Smith inquired. "We should have heard from his opposition before this. Certainly my husband would have heard of it."

"Colonel Presbury is a very *cool, cunning man*," Mrs. Clay said. "He knows *when* to act and when *to be still.* He is only waiting for an occasion to act surely. When an occasion offers, and if he can get a few to side with him, you will find that he will make difficulty here."

"O, well, he could get a few almost any time to side with him, as you say," Mrs. Smith remarked. "There are Mr. Otis, and Mr. Scott, and Mr. Andrews, who are ever ready to make parish trouble, you know."

"Ah, but such characters Colonel Presbury don't care to walk with alone," said Mrs. Clay. "If he had your husband and one or two like him, I guess he would be moving as I have said. You know a *deacon* can do much when opposed to a minister."

"If he can get my husband to join him in opposing Mr. Eldridge, there will be something new under the sun. If he waits for him, Mr. Eldridge will live and die here. *My husband would no more help dismiss Mr. Eldridge than he would try to get a new wife.*"

"No, I dare say he would not," Mrs. Clay said. "I did not mean to insinuate that he would, but only to say that Colonel Presbury would not do any thing unless he had some persons of influence and standing to back him up."

About a week from this period there was a town meeting for the choice of governor and other state and county

officers, and the opportunity was improved in circles by various individuals in conversing on the appointment of Mr. Eldridge. At one time Deacon Smith, Squire Davidson, Doctor Howard, Colonel Presbury, and one or two others were together talking over the matter."

"I should think," said Deacon Smith, "that if Mr. Eldridge intended to leave us he would say something about it by this time; shouldn't you, squire?"

"What do you mean, deacon?" said the squire. "Say something from the pulpit?"

"Yes; that is the common way, I believe, for ministers to do when they are thinking of leaving their people, is it not?"

"O, if he had determined to leave he would have announced such determination before this, I dare say," the squire remarked.

"Has he said any thing to you about it, squire?" Colonel Presbury asked.

"Nothing," the squire said. "He has not been at home much of late, and I have not seen him but once or twice since the news came. Besides, I do not think he would say any thing to me on the subject, nor, for that matter, to any one in the parish."

"No, I presume not," the deacon said. "He is not inclined to converse much on his own matters with any of his people."

"No, I know he is not," Colonel Presbury said; "but I thought it very probable he might have conversed with the squire about it. Well, squire, do you think he will accept?"

"I have thought not, judging from what I know of his feelings in relation to pastors leaving their people. I think he will decide to remain with us. I do not believe it is his duty to go any where else. I should very much regret it if he should leave us."

"I know," said the colonel, "he has a pretty strong hold here; but, then, *I have thought he would go.* The situation of a professor, you know, would suit his habits very well, and he would enjoy himself more where he could have nothing to do but study than he can here with so many interruptions. Besides, the salary he is offered is much more than what we give him; and that is something, you know."

"He has a good salary here. I have never heard him complain," the squire said; "and I do not think he would be influenced by money matters to leave us."

"No; *not he,*" the deacon said; "nor by any other matters. *I believe he will live and die among us. I hope so;* for we can never get a minister who will be so generally useful here as Mr. Eldridge is. *It would be a dark day for our parish* if he should leave."

"O, I don't know about that," the colonel said. "Mr. Eldridge is a very good man; but it would be strange if there are not others as good."

"Would you have him go, colonel?" the deacon asked.

"No, not that I know of; *but I would accept a good offer if I were in his place.* He is growing old, you know; and perhaps in a few years some of the people might wish for a younger man. If he takes this professorship, he will be sure of a good berth as long as he lives."

"How old is he?" the squire inquired with energy.

"O, he is rising of fifty, I suppose," the colonel said.

"Not fifty yet?" the squire remarked. "He is just in his prime. If he were as old as you and I, colonel, there would be some sense in talking about his being old, but not now. Mr. Eldridge will be more useful here for twenty-five years to come, if he lives so long, than he ever has been."

"Well, I do not know but he will," the colonel said. "He preaches as well now as he ever did, I think."

"He preaches better and better every year," said the squire; "don't you think so, deacon?"

"O, yes; that is a fact," the deacon said. "His age won't hurt him these thirty years yet."

"Do you think, colonel, there are any of the people here who would have Mr. Eldridge go away?" the deacon asked.

"Why, no; not that I know of. He is liked very well, I believe, *by most people.*"

Seeing some one pass whom he wished to notice, the colonel left the circle, when the squire remarked, —

"I rather think Colonel Presbury would have *no objections* to our pastor's leaving."

"His conversation *looked that way* certainly," said the deacon; "but he would not dare to say outright that he wished Mr. Eldridge to leave."

"I was *astonished*," Doctor Howard said, "to hear him talk so coolly on the subject. I thought he would have no objections to his leaving from his manner of speaking."

"I never heard him express himself so before in regard to Mr. Eldridge, I confess," the deacon said. "*Something* or other he don't like about him, that is a fact."

"You know," the squire said, "he talked very hard some years since when Mr. Eldridge took up the matter of the old parish debt. He did not like it at all to be taxed for its payment. I don't know of any thing else that has happened *but that* to disturb the colonel. At any rate, I never have heard of any thing else."

"That is an old affair," the deacon said. "That is dead and buried long ago. The colonel has forgotten all about it. I don't believe *that* is what disturbs him now, if any thing does."

"I don't know about that," the squire said. "My good wife used to say, 'The colonel *never forgets;* he is a man of strong feelings.' She used to say that the *colonel would one day make trouble out of that debt sermon.*"

"Well, let him try," the deacon said; "*he will find he will have to work alone.*"

A few weeks passed along, and nothing was known of the pastor's feelings in relation to his new appointment. He must have known, however, that there was strong anxiety on the part of his parishioners as to the disposition he would make of it; for on some of the many tongues which were in motion it must have been borne to him that his friends were enduring the anguish of suspense, and that it was their strong desire that he would speedily remove it. At length, before pronouncing the benediction at the close of the afternoon services, he requested the audience to be seated, as he had a communication to make. If ever five hundred souls were in breathless silence, it was then. Mr. Eldridge proceeded to remark that he was aware that there had been considerable excitement in the parish in relation to an invitation he had recently received to a vacant professorship in one of our theological institutions. He extremely regretted that the appointment had been made public, as he always preferred to have matters of this character confined to the parties immediately concerned until a decision could be made. He remarked that his judgment had long since been satisfied as to the duty of a pastor's continuance among his people. He was now, and ever had been, opposed to ruptures of the pastoral relation. There were circumstances attending his recent appointment, he said, which were to him very pleasant. He felt that he could enjoy himself much in the situation to which he had been invited, but that *he felt that he could not with a good conscience sunder the ties that bound him to the people* over whom he had been solemnly ordained. He had returned such a decision in a verbal manner weeks before to one of the trustees of the institution to which he had been called. He was urged, however, to take more time for the

consideration of the matter; and, from respect to the body from whence the invitation proceeded, he had taken such time, but said the time only confirmed his first decision, and that decision "I returned in a letter last week, which I now here publicly declare. My views of my duty to the people of my charge forbid my resignation. *I have consecrated myself to your service, and nothing that I can do shall be done to sunder the relation now subsisting between us.*"

After this manner the pastor addressed his people, and then pronounced the benediction, and the people began to disperse. Their countenances bespoke their relief and that they were most happily relieved. Throughout the week, in that parish, there was generally the expression of gladness that their pastor, who had served them so long and so faithfully, would continue to minister to them still. If there were exceptions, they were known only to the excepted. The breath of regret was not heard by others than those from whom it escaped. If such regret had been open, it would have been at once swallowed up in the general joy, and have drawn upon those expressing it the *severest frowns and indignation.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

The impression must have been made upon the mind of the reader that almost every excellence that attaches to the character of a faithful pastor was to be found in Mr. Eldridge. Not only had he from year to year advanced in theological learning and ability to preach; not only had he truly looked after the sick and sorrowful in the many families belonging to his charge; not only had he a watchful eye continually out on all things which would contribute to the prosperity of the church and parish, whether in their corporate or ecclesiastical character; not only was he the friend and advocate of those benevolent organizations the object of which is to lift the veil of moral darkness from all mankind, and thereby bring them under the genial influences of Scripture, of science, and of every thing which can adorn human nature; but he was more particular and specific, often, in the objects of his benevolent regard. His motto seemed to be, "Care for every one: do unto others as you would wish others to do to you." If he saw that he could aid a parishioner in any way, he was alert in sending him assistance. Instances of such friendly interposition might be cited by hundreds, which had occurred in the years of his ministry, and many of them, too, which, in the process of their manifestation, had been veiled from the public eye.

A noticeable feature in Mr. Eldridge's character was *his interest in mind.* As this constitutes the great distinction between man and the brute creation, he wished to see every where this distinction made as broad as it was in the power of education to accomplish. Consequently, almost every family in his parish experienced an impetus from him in the care of their own intellectual powers. Those who were parents in an especial manner were often roused to a consideration in this respect of their obligations to their children. By Mr. Eldridge, more than any one individual in the town, were the educational interests advanced among the people far beyond those in the surrounding community. From among his own people did our colleges receive more youth to educate than from all other towns in the county. Whenever he noticed a sprightly, promising young intellect, he marked it, and in his conversation with the parents excited them to care for it well and see that it had the necessary means for its culture. If he found such mind in a family where the parents were unable to do it justice, he would himself often look up friends who would assist in the important enterprise; and quite a number of lights in the legal, medical, and clerical professions would never have been known had he not interposed and prevented poverty from casting them into obscurity as they began to emerge into being. From almost the beginning of his ministry to the period when we are now contemplating him he might be heard facetiously alluding to his "*boys whom he had to look after*," meaning those who were preparing for college or already there.

At the period of his ministry in which we are now considering Mr. Eldridge there was a young man in his senior year in college who was indebted to him for being thus distinguished. Henry Arnold was the son of poor parents. Had his father lived, the destiny of the

children would not probably have been any better ; for all that he could do for them was to feed and clothe them. He died when Henry was four years of age, and then the care of him and of his sisters devolved on his mother. Henry was a bright boy, and ever attracted the notice of his pastor. In the school he was always diligent, and for this reason prosperous in his studies. Before he was twelve years old Mr. Eldridge was often heard to say, "Henry Arnold must have an education." In one of those revivals which so frequently blessed Mr. Eldridge's ministry Henry was converted. He had lived then sixteen years. Though the pastor had not heretofore seen his way clear to put him in the preparatory course for college, this event decided the matter. "Such a mind as Henry Arnold has must not be lost to the church," was a remark often heard about this period from Mr. Eldridge. "He must have an education ; he must be a minister." So enthusiastic was the pastor in the matter of the education of this youth that he encouraged him to commence fitting for college at once. He furnished him with books, and for months heard his recitations and took the whole charge of his education. Indeed, he fitted him for college. He then found friends who contributed for his support there ; for he was regarded by every one as a superior young man and as well deserving the advantages of a college. Nor did his career here in the least abate the ardor of friendship. It rather increased it, and at the same time furnished a satisfactory remuneration for the aid which had been and was being rendered. Hope began to be strong of him that he would make a most distinguished clergyman. All who knew him felt safe in the indulgence of such hope ; for his talents from year to year, in the facilities for improvement which were around him, shone brighter and brighter, and thus indicated that his path in this world would by no means be narrow or

obscure. Mr. Eldridge, all saw, was proud of him. Among the people he relished any allusions to young Arnold.

Two terms of his senior year had expired, and Henry came home to spend the vacation. The second house that saw him on his return from college was always that of his pastor and friend. From his mother's he went always to Mr. Eldridge's. When he returned to pass this his last vacation Mr. Eldridge was out of town, and not expected back for two days. He, however, had a warm reception from the pastor's wife, and was in and out at the parsonage several times before Mr. Eldridge's return. Mrs. Eldridge thought she discovered in some of the expressions of Henry an inclination towards some other profession than that of the ministry ; but as all the circumstances of the case seemed to forbid such an inclination, and as the manifestation was but slight, she could not realize that it could have been designed by Henry. Of course she did not converse with him as if there was a fear in her mind that he would not be a minister.

Mr. Eldridge returned home the third day after Henry's arrival. Of course there was much said of the friend who had long been near and dear to the pastor and wife. Whilst they were conversing respecting him during the evening, Mrs. Eldridge remarked that she did not know but that Henry was thinking of studying law, from some expressions he made to her. "He did not say much about it, and perhaps some people would not have noticed the least tendency in his mind that way," she remarked. Mr. Eldridge could not for a moment entertain such a suggestion, and at once charged it to some imaginary influence which had possession of his wife, which the good lady was willing to have done. When Henry called the next day, the pastor, in the course of the interview, remembering what his wife suggested, without the least anxiety on his part on the subject, but merely for the sake of a little pleasantry, said to his friend, —

"What do you think my wife hinted to me last night after I returned?"

Henry, either being at a loss for the right way of reply or not being yet ready to make the disclosure, hesitated, when Mr. Eldridge proceeded and said,—

"She remarked that she did not know but that you intended to study law."

Henry instantly colored, and with hesitation replied,—

"I was not aware that I had said to Mrs. Eldridge that such was my intention; but I must say that I have been greatly tried of late on the subject of a profession."

At this remark Mr. Eldridge was greatly affected, and he made no reply for a few moments. At length, however, he said, "*I thought that question had been decided for years.*"

"Well, sir, so did I think so until the last term. I have always contemplated the subject prospectively, you are aware, and did not dwell upon every thing connected with the ministry as I have been induced of late to do, as the time draws near for me to commence a professional preparation."

"I supposed," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "your whole soul was absorbed with the glorious end of the ministry, and that its incidentals were of minor importance."

"Well, sir, the *incidentals*, as you are pleased to call them, may very much affect some minds, so much so as to abridge their powers of doing good. I have thought that it is in the power of a pious physician or lawyer to do as much for God and man as a minister may accomplish. Certainly either might do more if the *minister* be not able to *fulfil his ministry.*"

"Not able to fulfil his ministry?" Mr. Eldridge said. "I do not know as I understand you. If a minister has a heart to preach and is blessed with health, why cannot he do so and fulfil his ministry? There is an abundant call for his labors."

"I should not think there was a very abundant call for ministers, judging from the manner in which they are treated. When farmers have any portion of their crops cut off and they feel that they may fall short, they are apt to husband what little they have with great care and to use it with great economy. If, on the other hand, there is a great supply, they are more careless and indifferent. Now, it appears to me that if ministers *were not very plenty*, and if people did not think it was one of *the easiest things in the world to get a minister*, they would not treat them as they often do. Really, Mr. Eldridge, I have thought I *should be used up in a very few years and be of no manner of service to the church, if I should study theology and enter the ministry*. There are many ministers of whom I have heard, and some whom I know, who were thrown aside from their work before they were fifty years of age. Some of these were men of good talents, of fervent piety, and sound preachers, and of irreproachable characters. Now, if such had studied law or physic, they might have been eminently useful as long as they lived. And then, again, if a minister sustains himself among a people till he is fifty or sixty years of age, he cannot reasonably expect to be useful much beyond that age. *The cry is after young men*, and the cry *would be after a young man*, and the aged pastor would hear it, and be compelled either to retire or have a colleague. Now, I do not like such things. I think an aged minister deserves to be as well appreciated as an aged doctor or lawyer. We all know that, when a *physician* has acquired *age*, he is *more sought after* and *more confided in* on that account ; so it is with a lawyer. Now, as people when they are sick prefer the experienced and aged physician to one who has had no, or but a very small, experience, — and as people, when they have property in jeopardy, consult experienced and aged lawyers in preference to younger and inexperienced men, — I do not

see why, in the matter of their souls' concerns, they should not prefer the ministers whose enlarged experience enables them far to transcend in ability to do good the young man who just commences preaching. Now, Mr. Eldridge, you must have seen that, the older a minister grows, the less popular he becomes. Now, *I do not wish to die before my time;* and I am very much afraid, if I become a minister, *I shall.* I desire to do good as long as I live, and to increase in power and ability and *opportunity* to do good till I die."

"You have made out something of a case," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "I suppose you think. What if all young men should reason as you do; what would become of the church and the world?"

"They would both become better, I hope. I think people would begin to reflect on their sinfulness in their treatment of ministers; that they would repent and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. Sometimes I have of late thought that it would be a good thing for the church if all our pious young men in our colleges would turn their attention to law, or medicine, or teaching for a few years, so that there should be none in our theological seminaries preparing for the ministry. If such should be the case, I think ministers would be in demand and be treated as though they were of some account."

"I am sorry to perceive," Mr. Eldridge replied, "that you are inclined to punish them all alike. Now, what you allege against people in their treatment of ministers is not true of *many parishes.* It is not true of mine. I have been here now seventeen years, and I do not see but that I am as much respected as ever I was and as much appreciated. My people respect ministers, I have thought, and are inclined to exalt them, perhaps, more than is proper. And there are other parishes that I could mention who always treat their pastors well, and who would be aggrieved

and feel themselves slandered by such remarks as you have made."

"There are exceptions to every rule, you know, Mr. Eldridge. I am aware that what you state of some parishes is true. I am willing to concede that we find *here* and *there* a minister who is appropriately treated by his people and who grows in their affection and confidence; but I think, where one such parish is found, there can be *ten* found of the opposite character."

"Do you find much sympathy in the pious members of your class with the views you have expressed to me?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"*That I do.* I do not think I should have felt as I do had I not conversed with these members as I have. Our whole class during the past year, almost every week after recitation, have remained a while and debated on the inducements held out by the three professions; and *I tell you* we have gone over the ground *pretty thoroughly.* What has been said in these debates about the inducements at the present day held out by the ministry has opened my eyes some and led me to close thought."

"What has been thus said?" Mr. Eldridge asked. "It would be a gratification to me to be informed."

"The precariousness of the pastoral relation is one of the strong objections to the clerical profession. A man don't know when he is safe. He may think himself strong in the affections of his people one month, and before another comes he may find that uneasiness has set in and that many of his people desire some other minister.

"One member of the class said that the minister in the town from which he came was dismissed last year because some of his people became dissatisfied at the choice he made of a wife. It was desired that he should marry a friend of an influential family in the parish; and, as he took the liberty to select his own wife, this family took exceptions to the

course, and withdrew their influence from him, and silently exerted themselves to his prejudice among the people, which resulted in his dismission.

"Another member of the class remarked that there was then a great commotion in the parish where he resided because *the minister's cows got into his neighbor's corn.* The fact was, the neighbor would not keep up his fence, and the minister did not feel that it was his duty to see to it any further than to request the neighbor to keep it in repair. He could not afford to hire his cows pastured elsewhere than in his own pasture; and so they went where they chose, and much damage was done. The people generally did not blame the minister; but the neighbor became exasperated, and began to rave wherever he went about the minister, telling for truth what never happened; and in this way he succeeded at last in creating a strong prejudice against him, which it was thought would terminate in his dismission.

"Another member of the class mentioned that the minister in the town adjoining the one in which he lived had lately been dismissed because a certain D. D., who had some considerable influence in the parish, had a relative whom he wished to have settled there. To bring about this result the doctor blew up a little fire which had almost gone out, and started one or two others in a different quarter of the parish; and at length the pastor was so warmly situated that he thought it for his comfort to vacate the parish for another minister.

"Another member of the class said that, in the town where a brother of his resided, the minister was about being dismissed because a pretty important lady in the parish did not think he was the right kind of a man to build up the parish. As she had much influence, many people listened to her, and of course the minister had to go."

"Well," said Mr. Eldridge, "I should have thought

some of the class who advocated for the ministry would have urged that ministers are sometimes dismissed when the people are not in fault at all — when the fault was altogether that of the minister."

"They did, sir. There were two or three of the class, who will study theology at all hazards, who did take this ground; and they mentioned several instances where pastors had been dismissed on account of their own conduct. It was said a minister had lately been dismissed for his being too much of a horse trader; that another had left his people recently because he would not study. He preferred the society of news tellers to his books, and was more willing to be on the piazza of the hotel, conversing with boarders there, than to being about among his people laboring to benefit their souls. But," the young man said, "those who advocated for the ministry could not bring up many instances where dismission had taken place when the ministers were most in fault. The other side could adduce five cases when the people were wholly to blame to one cited where the fault was entirely the minister's."

In this way did the pastor and his friend continue their conversation for some time, the pastor feeling deeply grieved at the tendency manifested by his friend towards a different profession from that to which he had supposed he was devoted. Subsequent interviews only strengthened the pastor's conviction that the talents and piety of Henry Arnold would probably be lost to the ministry, and he mourned most sincerely over his disappointed expectations.

Young Arnold at the close of the vacation returned to college, and in a few months was graduated with the highest honors of his class. He returned home, fixed in his purpose to pursue the study of law, provided he could do so with the approbation of those to whom he was indebted for his collegiate education. As he made known

this decision his friends were much disappointed ; for they were all induced to render him their assistance, in the belief that they would be thus adding another minister of Christ to the world. In the present state of Henry Arnold's feeling, however, they could not urge him to enter on a profession against his own convictions, and therefore yielded to his wishes and released him from all obligations to study theology. He therefore at once entered the office of a distinguished lawyer, where he diligently prosecuted the study of law till his entrance on practice. Though he had turned aside from the ministry, he did not allow the lustre of Christian character to become dim. He was regarded as a devoted Christian, and his many ways of activity for the advancement of the kingdom of his Savior were most warmly appreciated by all who were acquainted with him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CALL TO ANOTHER COUNCIL.

Mr. Eldridge, on his return home to dinner, after having been absent all the morning in the discharge of his parochial duties, found on the table of his study a letter missive from a church and pastor, requesting the presence of himself and a delegate in an ecclesiastical council, to advise and act in some matters of difficulty. Of the pastor whose name was attached to the letter he had for some years heard pleasant things said; and though a stranger to him, yet Mr. Eldridge was accustomed to regard him as among our most useful ministers. He therefore was pained to learn, as the letter missive foreshadowed, that untoward events had disturbed the relations of this brother to his people which might result in his dismission. Although the distance was somewhat remote, yet Mr. Eldridge found himself possessed with a strong inclination to be present at the council, and his church accordingly voted to send. He therefore, with a delegate, at the appointed time repaired to the scene of trouble.

When the period arrived for the pastor to expose to the council his situation in relation to the people of his charge, he remarked that he had for months past felt that his pastoral connection with his present people must be dissolved, and that he should in a quiet manner have sought a release had his judgment and conscience sanctioned the

course. He remarked, he was impressed that more than himself were affected by the causes which had of late interrupted his usefulness, and, therefore, that it was due to other interests that he should sacrifice his own private feelings and bring out to the public eye the course pursued to satisfy individual animosity and gratify unholy feelings, in attempts to undermine and destroy his usefulness. In consequence of these things, he remarked, great and threatening evils had already appeared in our Zion. The stability of our churches and the efficiency of our ministry are greatly endangered; and he felt called upon to take a firm stand against the facilities which of late have largely multiplied for destroying the usefulness of pastors, for the purpose of effecting a change of ministry. He was convinced something ought to be attempted to stop the progress of the disorganizing spirit which had of late affected our churches. He was fully convinced that a public manifestation of the conduct of churches who make it necessary by their own conduct for their pastors to leave would operate to deter from such conduct; and therefore he had not heeded the partial hints of some of his people in the first place, and their less gentle manifestations in the last place, that by giving up his pastorate to a new incumbent he would be conferring a favor upon his people. He felt that he would not work with those who for no cause, and against cause, were striving for his ruin among the people of his charge. It was his belief that, if they took the laboring oar, it was best that they alone, without *his help*, should use it. Because of these convictions, he remarked, this ecclesiastical council has been convoked to examine into the state of our affairs and to advise to the proper course for all parties to pursue.

The council then required of the committee a statement of the difficulties in which both pastor and people were involved and in relation to which advice was sought.

This requisition was met by the chairman, one of the deacons of the church, who arose and remarked that "the people in this place have for some months past been agitated by dissatisfaction with their pastor. It was hoped," he continued, "that, when the pastor was made *acquainted* with such dissatisfaction, he would see it most for his *comfort and usefulness* to seek some other field of labor; but he paid no attention to complaints, and continued, after he was apprised of them, to go on as usual. He was, as a last resort, requested to unite in a council; or, rather, he proposed himself to submit the matter to a council, and the proposition was acceded to by the church; and thus it is why this council has been called. We have been advised by our pastor that the council would expect complaints to be submitted in writing; and so the committee have drawn them up, and have furnished the pastor with a copy of the same."

The first charge is, that the pastor neglected to visit his people.

The second, that he was not prompt in the payment of his debts. He promised to pay, and did not fulfil his agreement.

The third was, that the pastor failed in his pulpit performances, and did not maintain weekly prayer meetings.

The fourth was, that the pastor's usefulness in this place is at an end.

These several charges were supported with all the testimony that could be obtained by the committee, and then the pastor was called upon to defend himself. Accordingly he addressed himself at once to the work before him, and remarked, that in relation to the first charge, that of visiting the people, he would say, that he had pursued that course which his judgment admonished him was wise and proper. "The people in this place, as a general thing, wish for as little attention from a minister in his

professional character as possible. They are ready enough to see him as a man, *provided* they *are not engaged* in their worldly business, which is not very often the case except in very stormy weather; but to see him as a religious teacher, as one who comes to them to converse on the great interests of the soul, they are strongly and peculiarly disinclined. When I first came among them I began a course of visitation, as I was in the habit of pursuing in my ministry in the first place of my settlement. I soon met with very serious obstacles: but, feeling that I might be instrumental in the accomplishment of good, I persevered and went through, visiting all the people to whom I could get access. To some I could get no access. When I was seen approaching, certain families would close and bolt their doors, and suffer me to wait and knock for admission in vain. Others would leave the house and conceal themselves, as they supposed, from my eye. I well remember being in a certain neighborhood, and, as I was about to enter a certain house, seeing the man of that house at the door as I approached it. When I entered the house, and whilst I sat therein, he was not to be seen. In answer to my inquiries after him, I was told he was somewhere about; but neither wife nor child moved to look him up. Finishing my visit, and wishing to call on another family, my quickest route lay back of this house, over fences and walls. I therefore took such route, and, as I passed out, looking about me, I saw, crouching down under an out building, the man whom I wished to see and who *ran off as I came up to his house.* There I saw him, looking as a truant child looks when endeavoring to conceal himself from a parent or some one else who was in search of him. I had no doubt then, I have no doubt now, that this individual concealed himself there to be out of my way; for when I looked to this place of his concealment he started, and there was shame on his countenance. He was not

expecting me back of the house. He thought, as I entered, so I should depart, through the front door. This scene made a most deep impression on my mind, and it gave me the general character of the people ; and I am sorry to say that my subsequent acquaintance with them has not altered this impression. With a minister of the gospel they wish to have as little to do as possible. I have felt that time spent in going from house to house here, where the disinclination is so general to hear any thing said on the subject of personal religion, was time thrown away. Whenever and wherever I could visit to profit I have done so.

"As to the next complaint, that I have broken my word in regard to money matters, I have to remark, that I have often engaged to pay sundry bills at a time which was always past the period when my salary was due. The individuals to whom I was indebted *knew* that I was dependent upon the *promptness* of the people to be *prompt* myself; and I have not till recently heard that any blame was attached to me for delinquency. The backwardness of the people in not paying my salary I have often heard most severely censured : and, too, I have often heard the wonder expressed how I could get along as I did when not a quarter part of the half-year's salary was paid when the next half year had expired. I own that I have not paid my debts as promptly as I agreed ; but I *agreed* to pay them on the *faith* of the *promptitude* of the people. As they have been backward and are now greatly in arrears to me, I submit it to the council if a complaint against me for breaking my word in this matter *comes with a good grace from them.*

"In relation to the next charge, that of failure in my pulpit performances, I would remark, that I have never equalled my wishes in this respect. I did not equal them when I preached to this people as a candidate, nor in the

four years when the reports came to me and went forth abroad from the people here that they had the *smartest man in the association*. I think there has been no falling off in the power of my preaching. I have endeavored, to the best of my ability, to preach faithfully and to bring no unbeaten oil into the sanctuary. I have with me here the sermons I prepared and preached during the year ending the last Sabbath, thirty-six in number; and I can have here thirty-nine sermons I prepared and preached the previous year, for the inspection of the council; and there are individuals of intelligence and education who will testify that, in their opinion, instead of having failed in my pulpit performances, I have advanced from year to year in interest. I think, after the council shall have heard their testimony, they will determine that my opponents have altogether failed in substantiating this charge. As it respects the discontinuance of the weekly prayer meeting, I would say, that I did so because there were but two or three who would come together for the service. I ever have felt the importance of these meetings — have felt the need of them for my own profit and encouragement, and for the good of the church and the benefit of the people; but from the first there has been a disinclination on the part of the church to attend upon them. I have preached on the subject. When I have notified these meetings from the pulpit, I have often urged the necessity and importance of their being attended. I have conversed in private with the members of the church in relation to their own duty to attend the prayer meetings; and yet they have not been attended. Often I have been to the place of prayer and not an individual was to be seen. The fact is, the brethren of the church are bound up in the world, and have no heart to pray, I fear.

As to the last charge, that my usefulness is at an end in this place, I would say, that I fear it is if the present feel-

ing continues. But how has it been destroyed? I think I can throw some light on this matter. For four years it was generally acknowledged that I was *just the man for this people*. All said this. And now, how has my usefulness been destroyed in the last two years? — which is the time my opponents allege that I have not been useful here. About two years ago I felt it to be my duty to preach on certain subjects and rebuke certain sins. I felt called upon thus to do by the good of the people. I did this, and many, very many, there were who expressed themselves gratified at my course, and who gave it as their opinion that good would be the consequence. There was one man, however, who took exceptions to my preaching. He thought I was personal, and he became actively opposed to me. The fact was, I never thought of this individual in particular when I preached the sermons to which he was so much opposed. It was the farthest from my design to hold him up, as he alleges that I did, as on the highway to the world of torment. I have told him this, and I have told others this, before; but he would have it that I preached to him, and would not be pacified or reasoned with. Being a man of wealth, he had influence. A number of the people here were indebted to, and felt their dependence, in a measure, upon him. There were some such in the church; one of the deacons is of this number; and this individual resolved on my dismission, and he went to work accordingly to effect it. He went to the deacon, who was largely indebted to him, and told him that I must leave. He represented to him that many here were dissatisfied, and he succeeded in souring the mind of the deacon towards me and in making him an instrument to aid him in the work on which he was bent. The deacon began to exert an influence to my disadvantage. Of course he was listened to, and what he said to others had weight. In this way has it come to pass that

my usefulness is at an end ; not by *my neglect of duty*, but by my *fidelity*, as I fully believe. Had I preached so as to have disturbed no one's conscience or heart, I verily believe those who were the first to proclaim that my usefulness was at an end here would have been silent."

Various individuals were called upon by the pastor, who fully substantiated his remarks in relation to all the charges which had been adduced against him. It was evident that his opponents were not prepared for such a general raking up of their conduct, and had not anticipated that what they had said in the ear would be proclaimed on the house tops. Some who looked on thought that they read in their looks that, if they had supposed that their course to ruin and destroy a pastor would have been thus known, they would have been still and not have engaged in this work of meanness.

The parties, having made to the council all the exposition they desired of the difficulties in which they were involved, were left by this body, who adjourned for private deliberation from the vestry, where they had thus far met, to a private house. Here they were in session several hours, carefully considering the testimony which had been given in touching all the charges which had been preferred against the pastor.

At length the church bell rang, as a signal that the council were prepared to communicate the result of their deliberations, and in a little time the vestry was filled with people. The moderator remarked that the council, wishing to act fairly and impartially, had taken time to go over all the facts in the case and to examine carefully all the testimony which had been offered. For this reason, their session in private had been protracted. He was happy to state that the council had been harmonious in their views, and had unanimously come to the result which the scribe would now read.

From this document it appeared that the council, in view of the evidence submitted, took the same view of the propriety and expediency of the pastor's visiting his people which he presented. If the people would not give attention to conversation on the subject of religion, if it was manifest that they resorted to any measures to avoid it, they had no right to expect of their minister that he would consume his time in mere social visitation. In respect to his not fulfilling his pecuniary engagements, the council could not see how it was possible for him so to do when his people were so remiss in paying him what was his due. Had they promptly fulfilled their obligations to him, and he had been backward in discharging his own liabilities to any of his people, there would have been ground of severe censure. Before a pastor can *pay out* his people must *pay in* to him; and it is unreasonable and unrighteous for them to complain, as they were aware that he was not in the receipt of his salary. In relation to any failure on the part of the pastor in his pulpit performances, the council, from the testimony given and from the examination of the discourses submitted to them, are happy to feel that the pastor has been advancing both in literary merit and theological knowledge and ability to preach. Of the allegation that the pastor's usefulness to his people is at an end, the council are pained to acknowledge that in their opinion such is the fact. They feel, however, that this usefulness has been destroyed by reason of the efforts of some of his people. From the testimony brought forward, it is evident that one individual began this work of destruction when goaded up by a guilty conscience under the faithful preaching of the pastor, and that this individual, through his position in society and his relations to many of the people, was successful in making instruments for the furtherance of his own evil designs of some who ought to have been the pastor's most zealous supporters and friends.

The way in which the pastor's influence and usefulness is at an end here would destroy the usefulness of every pastor in the land. No minister could stand before the attempts which have here been made to destroy him ; and the council cannot refrain from expressing their most decided condemnation of the artifice of some, and servility of others, by which difficulties here have been created and continued. The council would exhort those who have been, by deception or through fear, induced to take up weapons against a beloved and worthy minister of Christ, to pause and reflect upon the sinfulness of their conduct, and repent. The council are of the opinion that the pastor can no longer be useful among his present people unless there is a manifest change of feeling on the part of those through whose instrumentality his usefulness has been destroyed ; and, therefore, they recommend that his pastoral relation be dissolved.

After the result had been read the council adjourned and the members dispersed to their respective homes.

Whilst Mr. Eldridge, and his delegate, Dr. Howard, were riding towards their home, considerable conversation was had in relation to the matters which had occupied their attention whilst they were present in council. Whilst thus conversing, the doctor remarked, —

"What an easy thing it is to dismiss a minister! Only let one or two individuals of any standing in a parish set themselves at work, and they will succeed in dismissing any minister in the state."

"There is much truth in that remark," Mr. Eldridge said. "It is strange people will be led away as they are ; that they will lend a helping hand to a work which is so often productive of so many evils as the dismission of a faithful pastor often occasions both to himself and family and his people likewise."

"It is strange," the doctor said, "men of sense do not

see such evils and at once nip all attempts made to encircle difficulties around a minister. It might be done if people felt as they ought."

"That is true," Mr. Eldridge remarked; "and, before we shall have a permanent ministry, the course you suggest will have to be pursued."

"Well," said the doctor, "one thing has puzzled me some — the course some ministers who have been dismissed and who remain in the parish pursue. I should think, of all men, they would be the last to do any thing to make the situation of their successor uncomfortable. Yet I find they are sometimes foremost in making a disturbance. Now, there is Mr. Packard; he must leave his people."

"Brother Packard a-going to leave his people!" Mr. Eldridge exclaimed. "I am astonished."

"I was at his parish last week visiting some patients, and I learned that he was going away."

"For what?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"O, there is trouble there. The people, some of them, think he might be more useful somewhere else. From all that I could gather, I made up my mind that the principal source of opposition to him was in his predecessor and his family."

"Oho! that cannot be," Mr. Eldridge said. "The old gentleman is a man who would not be guilty of doing any thing to injure Mr. Packard."

"I do not know; but some of the people told me that he and his children were thought to be opposed to Mr. Packard. They were very intimate with a few who are openly opposed to him."

"Well, I do not know but that it is so," Mr. Eldridge said; "it may be. I remember now hearing brother Packard say that Mr. Worcester was not very attentive to him, and that his family were rather cold and distant. But I

thought nothing more of it. He said this two or three years ago."

"The people there say," the doctor remarked, "that Mr. Worcester and his children want to have *Mr. Packard turned away* because they *dismissed Mr. Worcester*."

"O, I cannot think that such is the feeling of Mr. Worcester and his children," Mr. Eldridge said. "Mr. Packard always speaks highly of Mr. Worcester, and I have noticed that they frequently come together to the meetings of our association."

"Well," said the doctor, "I believe that, if *Mr. Worcester and family had not exerted a secret influence against Mr. Packard*, there would not have been any very serious trouble in his parish. I form my opinion of what some of the best people there say; and I think it very strange, after the treatment which Mr. Worcester received, that he and his children should do what they all condemned so freely in others."

It was not long after this conversation before Mr. Eldridge and Mr. Packard met. The latter was about being dismissed, and he fully admitted to Mr. Eldridge that a great cause of the trouble with him was *in the course pursued among a certain portion of the people by his predecessor and children.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OTHER STORE.

Around the meeting house of Mr. Eldridge much of a village existed. From the taste displayed in the location of the houses, in the construction of the fences, and in the multiplication of shade trees and shrubbery of different variety, the village had acquired much celebrity in the region for its beauty and loveliness. There had ever been one store by the meeting house, filled with every variety of merchandise that was necessary for the supply of the wants of the community. For many years this store had been in the occupancy of Squire Davidson, in whose fair and honorable dealing all had the fullest confidence. As he grew rich by trade, another individual thought that he would attempt the making of a fortune in the same way. Consequently, he built and furnished a store about two years before the settlement of Mr. Eldridge; but, not being of a commercial mould, instead of making, he lost money by the transaction, and gave up the business. For several years the store remained closed. It was, however, opened again by a young man of enterprise and piety when Mr. Eldridge was in the seventh year of his pastorate; and it yielded to its proprietor a handsome profit, though by no means equal to that which Squire Davidson received. Such profits as his were not expected; for the business transacted was not near as large as that prose-

cuted by the squire. Between the occupant of this store (Mr. Fowler) and Mr. Eldridge there was ever the utmost kindness of feeling, and no exceptions whatever were taken to the pastor's trading with Squire Davidson. When Mr. Eldridge had been settled about sixteen years, Mr. Fowler was taken suddenly away, and, in the settlement of his estate, it became necessary to sell the store. Colonel Presbury was the purchaser. It was soon reopened by a gentleman with the name of Dixon, who had much of the spirit of trade and was anxious for all that he could command. As a matter of course he was an attendant on the preaching of Mr. Eldridge, and was often heard to say pretty things of the minister, *especially* when he thought they would reach the pastor's ears.

A store in the country has frequently many visitors in the evening. Some individuals, being busy all the day, find it most for their convenience to purchase their little articles of every-day consumption in the evening; and other individuals are in the habit of making such a place their resort for the purpose of hearing the current news. Boys, too, often happen in, to gratify an idle curiosity or to make some little purchases. Mr. Dixon had been in business a little more than a year, when a son of Mr. Clay, accompanied by a nephew of Mr. Eldridge, who had been in town but a few years, entered the store in the evening. They were passing along, and seeing a number of people therein, and hearing loud laughing and merriment, it was natural for them to stop and see what was going on. So many being together, they were probably unobserved, or, if observed by some near the door, they could not have been seen farther along, where the scene of conversation was. They had not been there long before they heard Mr. Dixon remark, —

"Well, I can't get over it that Mr. Eldridge does all his trading over at the squire's."

"Don't you know the reason of this?" a good-natured gentleman, Mr. Crane, inquired.

"Yes, I suppose I do," Mr. Dixon said. "The squire is a great man among us, and Mr. Eldridge thinks he must keep the right side of him, or else he'll have trouble."

"You are greatly mistaken, friend Dixon, if you suppose *that* is the reason. It is no such thing. The squire, I am told, always sells Mr. Eldridge his goods at cost, and, when he settles his bill, always makes him a handsome discount."

"Yes," said Mr. Billings; "that is a fact, I believe. I always understood it so. Mr. Fowler used to say that was the case, and he said he did not blame Mr. Eldridge in the least. The squire was able to be liberal, he said; and, for his part, he was glad that he showed the minister so great a favor."

"I should think," Mr. Otis said, "as long as Mr. Dixon has just begun here, that Mr. Eldridge ought to buy some of his things of him, just to encourage him. You know it would have influence on others; for many people would be influenced to do their trading here if the parson patronized the store."

"Yes," said Mr. Dixon; "that is it. I dare say the squire gets custom by being generous to the minister. He gets good pay for all that he sells Mr. Eldridge, I'll be bound."

"O," Mr. Crane said, "it don't make a cent's difference in the business of Mr. Davidson by having the custom of Mr. Eldridge. He would sell just as much if Mr. Eldridge bought all his goods out of town. The squire keeps a great store, has been in business a great while, and people like to trade there; and they would trade there as much as they do now if Mr. Eldridge did not buy any thing of him."

"Well, I don't like it," Mr. Dixon said, "not to have

the minister trade here some. I would do well by him. I could not afford to sell exactly at cost; but then I would give him good bargains."

"If I were in your place," Mr. Crane observed, "I would not say any thing about not having the patronage of Mr. Eldridge. He has a good many friends here, you know; and you might be injured yourself through their influence, if they should know you said hard things of the minister."

"I don't know about that," Mr. Dixon said. "I think a minister ought to patronize all who hear him preach, and I find others think so too. There is the colonel; he was in here the other day talking about it, and he said that Mr. Eldridge did wrong in not trading with me some. I rather think, if the parson don't trade here, he'll wish he had."

Mr. Dixon's attention being directed towards one or two customers who addressed him with considerable impatience at the delay he caused them in being thus engrossed in conversation, he at once dropped the subject and proceeded to wait upon them. The son of Mr. Clay thereupon left the store and returned home highly excited, and related to his parents what he had heard.

"Is it possible," his mother said, "that Mr. Dixon would allow himself to talk in this manner?"

"Yes," Mr. Clay remarked; "I should expect that he would feel and talk pretty much as Thomas says. He is a man of a very nervous temperament, I should judge by what little I have seen of him, and not of very enlarged views, and with a strong passion for gain. I am not at all astonished that he should express himself as he has."

"He may be of great injury to Mr. Eldridge," Mrs. Clay observed. "He probably has acquired a strong prejudice against Mr. Eldridge; and, by his talking as he did this evening, we must infer that he is in the habit of speaking to his disadvantage."

"Yes," Mr. Clay said; "Mr. Dixon will undoubtedly endeavor to prejudice people against our pastor, and undoubtedly he will succeed to some extent. It is very unfortunate that he is not such a man as Mr. Fowler — a man who is capable of taking a right view of a thing, and not entirely bound up in self-interest."

"Mr. Fowler never took any exceptions to Mr. Eldridge's trading with Squire Davidson, did he, dear?"

"No, not he," Mr. Clay replied. "I have heard him speak on the subject again and again; and he uniformly expressed himself happy that it was in the power of the squire to treat Mr. Eldridge with so much generosity, and at the same time regretted that his circumstances did not allow him to do as much. He said that he should do as Mr. Eldridge did were he in his situation."

"Mr. Fowler was a lovely man," Mrs. Clay remarked; "and it is a great pity that one so unlike him should take his place in the store."

"Well," Mr. Clay said, rising from his chair and beginning to pace the floor, "I am extremely sorry that Mr. Dixon ever came here, if this is the way he is going to act. He will exert an influence that will be very much to Mr. Eldridge's disadvantage, I am afraid. Of course, as he keeps a store, he will see a large number of people, and he will have it in his power to say a great many things against Mr. Eldridge, which will be believed, and of course which will affect the feelings of the people hearing, and sour them towards the minister. Whenever any persons become a little excited by any thing which Mr. Eldridge may say or do, *they will have a place to go for sympathy;* and Mr. Dixon's store will be a sort of rendezvous for such as may be inclined to make trouble in the parish. I dare say Mr. Otis and Mr. Andrews have found out that he feels sore, and that they are in his store pretty often; and, if Mr. Scott were alive, he would be there too."

"Mr. Otis was in the store to-night, father," Thomas remarked.

"There, that's it!" Mr. Clay said. "Was not Mr. Andrews likewise?"

"I did not see him," Thomas replied.

"Yes," Mr. Clay said. "Such characters as Mr. Otis and Mr. Andrews will be in there almost every evening, and they will talk about Mr. Eldridge and set all his conduct out in the worst possible manner; and undoubtedly they will succeed in bringing over to their views and feelings quite a number of people in the course of a little time."

"O husband," Mrs. Clay said, "if people find out that Mr. Dixon is so much opposed to Mr. Eldridge they will not visit his store."

"That may be the case with many individuals," Mr. Clay said, — "with such individuals as act from principle, — but, you know, there are more of the opposite character in the world than such. It is greatly to be lamented that, when we have but two stores in town, one of these should be kept by an individual like this Mr. Dixon."

"There is the tavern," Mrs. Clay said. "People go in there and talk; and, if they were inclined to talk against Mr. Eldridge, they could go there and do so."

"Indeed they could not, if Mr. Shipley was about," Mr. Clay said. "He would have no such men in his house as were inclined to run out against Mr. Eldridge."

"Does Mr. Dixon own that store, husband, or does he hire it of Mrs. Fowler?" Mrs. Clay inquired.

"The store was sold soon after Mr. Fowler died," Mr. Clay remarked, "and Colonel Presbury bought it."

"Ah, I never heard of that," Mrs. Clay said. "Then Colonel Presbury owns the store. Well, he won't object to his tenant's course, will he, husband?"

"No, not in the least. We know how the colonel has

felt towards Mr. Eldridge ever since he had to pay one hundred and sixty dollars for removing that old parish debt. I dare say Mr. Dixon has discovered how the colonel feels, and that he is emboldened by him in the course he is pursuing. It may be Mr. Dixon acts according to *instructions* from the colonel."

"Yes," Thomas said. "Mr. Dixon told Mr. Crane this evening that the colonel said Mr. Eldridge ought to do a part of his trading at his store, and that he did not like it at all that he did not."

"Mr. Dixon said this, Thomas, did he?" Mr. Clay asked. "There is no doubt, then, that the colonel encourages Mr. Dixon. I should not be surprised if it was a plan of the colonel to purchase that store and have it occupied by a man whom he could use as an instrument to disturb Mr. Eldridge. It certainly looks like it."

"Yes; I think it does," Mrs. Clay said; "but then the colonel cannot expect to harm Mr. Eldridge very seriously. He knows how attached the people are to their minister, and that any opposition of a few could not essentially injure him."

"I don't know about that," Mr. Clay replied. "A continual dropping wears the stone. Colonel Presbury is a man of property, and, if he really is *determined* to exert himself against Mr. Eldridge, he can do him much harm. *Mr. Dixon's store will be the place, I am persuaded, where great mischief will be done.*"

"Colonel Presbury has not more property than Squire Davidson and some others here who are friendly to Mr. Eldridge. Deacon Smith is as wealthy as the colonel," Mrs. Clay said. "These persons can outdo the colonel if influence is to be measured by property; and so there will not be much for Mr. Eldridge really to fear. There is no man in town who has the influence which the squire has."

"The squire is growing old, you know, and his health is failing, and he cannot be expected to remain with us long," Mr. Clay remarked.

"I know that, my dear," Mrs. Clay replied; "but then if his son Charles moves on, as he probably will in the spring, he will take his father's place, I dare say. You know he is a great friend to Mr. Eldridge, and he would, on his own, and on his mother and father's account, exert himself with all his might to prevent any injury being done Mr. Eldridge by Mr. Dixon or the colonel."

"That is all true," Mr. Clay said; "but perhaps he will not come on; his wife, I thought, was opposed to it; and, if he should, he could not exert the influence his father has exerted."

"He will come on in the spring, I know," Mrs. Clay said. "When Frances (Mrs. Howard) called here yesterday she told me that Charles's wife had altered her feelings, and that she thought they ought to move on, as the squire wishes them to do so much."

"Well, that will be a grand thing for the parish if Charles should take up his residence here," Mr. Clay said. "He is thought much of by many people here, and he is a man of energy and decision, very much like his father."

A man in the employ of Mr. Clay entered the room and announced that an accident had happened at the barn, which of course suspended further conversation. The reader, however, will know more of the other store by and by.

CHAPTER XXX.

REPAIRING THE CHURCH.

WHATEVER might have been attempted at "the other store" or in any other quarter for two or three years after Mr. Dixon commenced business for creating a disturbance in the prospects of Mr. Eldridge, yet no progress was reported which reached the general circles of the parish. The pastor preached his eighteenth anniversary discourse, feeling that his hold on the affections of his people was as strong as at any past period of his ministry. In the course of this sermon allusion was made to a variety of local matters touching the prosperity of both church and parish, and a gentle hint was given that it might be well for the people to consider that both age and fashion had given to the sanctuary of their fathers and their own somewhat of a peculiar appearance, which might be remedied by the application of some of the improved forms of church architecture. If other parts of the sermon failed to lodge in the minds and hearts of his hearers, certain it was that this hint was remembered. It was the very thing which the younger part of the parish had long wanted to be sounded from the pulpit; for they thought the fathers would hear it and be excited to move in the matter of making their house of worship more convenient, more attractive, and more in conformity to churches which had recently been erected. There was nothing

about this church which denoted neglect. It had been well cared for. Both the carpenter and the painter had been there as often as their services were in the least needed; but it had the disadvantage of age. It had stood thirty-five years. The pulpit was high, the galleries were high, the slips were high and roomy; and, besides, there had never been heard within its walls the sound of the organ. If the old folks had not observed all these things and mourned over them, the young people had; and it was a cause of great rejoicing to them when their pastor gently hinted that the advancement which had recently been made in the art of architecture might do much towards the improvement of their own sanctuary.

As might be expected, a new subject began to be agitated in all the circles of the parish; and, because there were advocates of the measure in almost every house, it became absolutely indispensable to parochial quietude that it should receive some official notice. It had been suggested that the expense attendant on the repairing of the church could be met by subscription, and thus it would throw no burden on unwilling shoulders; but as the meeting house was parish property, and as every thing pertaining to ecclesiastical expenditures had from time immemorial in that parish been settled from the parish treasury, such a suggestion did not meet with very popular favor. It was urged by some few who were apprised of the effect which the parish tax for the liquidation of the old parish debt had upon a certain individual, that, as the sore had not yet healed over, it might be politic not to make a tax for the object, but to have the expense borne by those who were disposed to contribute; but the people generally were too democratic, and at last it was given over in private where the matter had thus far been only discussed, and it was thought that, if the church was to be repaired, it must be done at the parish expense.

A parish meeting was at length called for the consideration of this matter, and the attendance was large. The first question which came up was upon the necessity of repairing the house. Upon this there was considerable debate. Some thought the house was well enough as it was. Some thought it might be well to make the pews a little narrower, for it would increase their number, and more were wanted; but the greater number who participated in the debate went for a thorough repair and remodelling of the house. At last the motion was made to remodel the house, and to furnish it with an organ which should not cost more than eighteen hundred dollars. The expense of remodelling the house had been set at about seven hundred dollars; and it was thought that twenty-five hundred would do the whole.

Hitherto the debate had been on the article in the warrant to see if the parish will repair the meeting house and furnish it with an organ. Now the question came a little closer to the pockets, and of course a little nearer the hearts, of certain individuals at least. After this motion was made, Colonel Presbury had the floor first. He had no objection to remodelling the church and having it furnished with an organ. He was in favor of the project, provided it could be accomplished in a proper manner. He had no doubt money enough could be raised, and it was his opinion that it would be best for the parish to have a subscription taken for the object rather than make a tax. He was ready to subscribe liberally, and he had no doubt that every member of the parish would do the same; and if all had the privilege of giving what they pleased, there would be no cause for trouble. Besides, he said, there were many who attended meeting here who did not belong to the parish, and these would put down something; whereas, if a tax were made, we should lose this amount.

Mr. Crane, a gentleman of a very peaceable turn of

mind, and wished every individual accommodated, next rose, and remarked, that he cared not how the repairs were effected, whether by tax or subscription. He was for having people satisfied. As the colonel was a man of considerable property, he thought it might be well to hear him, and have a subscription paper opened, assenting to his suggestion.

Mr. Otis, who always preferred subscription papers to taxes, because he could get off with less money, and frequently with no money at all, by being *opposed* to the object subscribed for, was in favor of the colonel's plan, and hoped it would be adopted.

Several others advocated it with much energy; but then there were those who strongly opposed it. Squire Davidson, though in feeble health, rallied himself and made a long speech in favor of having the house repaired by a tax. So did his son, who had taken up his abode in the parish, having removed from the south a year and a half before. Deacon Smith, Mr. Clay, Dr. Howard, all advocated a tax; and when the vote was taken sixty-three were in favor of a tax and eleven opposed; so the house was to be remodelled and furnished with an organ at the expense of the parish.

After the declaration of the vote, some who understood the colonel's physiognomy saw, as they thought, some foreshadowings of trouble expressed therein. However, they kept their own secrets, and whispered not abroad what they surmised, but kept an eye out in watch after his movements. Mr. Clay thought there would be some explosion that evening at Mr. Dixon's store; and so he made some errand for his hired man, who was of an intelligent cast, and sent him down to perform it. As he was going out of the yard Mr. Clay called to him and said,—

"John, *perhaps* there will be something said at the store about the parish meeting this afternoon. If there should be *you can stay a while* and hear, and let me know."

John went on, and when he arrived at the store he found that there were quite a number of people there; and as he went in he heard much loud talking and saw some angry faces, which led him to conclude some unpleasant subject was being discussed. He soon heard some one say, who he did not know, —

"Well, I think this business will finish him up in these parts."

"Yes," Mr. Dixon said, "I think it will; that's a fact. A minister had better let alone what don't concern him. As for putting up the people to lay out two or three thousand dollars on the meeting house he preaches in, just to make it look grand, he'll find is rather poor business."

"Have I not said once or twice here this evening," Mr. Parker remarked, "that it was a minister's duty to urge his people to do what he thought would be for their present and future good? Mr. Eldridge has not made the people repair the meeting house. They voted to do this because they thought they had a right to do as they pleased. If they had taken no notice of what he said in his sermon he would not have thought it strange. He merely touched them up a little about the meeting house, and they took the hint, and have voted to do something handsome for the church. I think this blaming the minister for what the parish does is rather unreasonable and very silly."

"It is bad that they are going to make a tax for this business," Colonel Presbury said. "I am afraid it will make bad business. The whole thing might be done by subscription, and then there would be no hard feelings."

"You don't know *that*, colonel," Mr. Parker said. "It seems there were only eleven who were opposed to a tax and sixty-three in favor of one. You are not sure that there would not have been very hard feelings in some of these sixty-three if they could not have had a tax. We must let the majority govern in this country."

"Well, I insist upon it, this taxing people to pay parish expenses is not politic," the colonel said.

"Our people here don't think so," Mr. Parker said. "We have always done this, you know; and there are not many parishes about who have less trouble than ours."

"I know we have got along tolerably well," the colonel said; "but I am afraid we sha'n't much longer."

"What is going to happen, colonel?" Mr. Parker asked.

"O, I do not know that any thing will; but perhaps, if you and I both live a few years longer, we may see."

"You don't mean to sign off, colonel, do you?" Mr. Parker inquired.

"Sign off! No, indeed!" the colonel replied, with much feeling; "that is not my way. I have belonged to the parish ever since I was one and twenty, and my father before me always was a member of the parish; and I rather think I shall stick by it as long as I live."

"I am glad to hear you talk so," Mr. Parker said. "We should be sorry to lose you, colonel."

After this manner did conversation run for an hour or more; and John, thinking he understood the drift of the discussion, took up his bundle which he had purchased and proceeded homeward. Entering the room where Mr. Clay was, and giving up his purchase, he turned to go out, when Mr. Clay said, —

"Well, John, were there many at the store to-night?"

"Pretty good number of youngsters there," John said, "but not more than six or seven men."

"Well, what was the topic to-night?"

"They were talking about fixing the meeting house," John said.

"Well, what did they say?"

John then went on and narrated what he could remem

ber, much of which conversation has been given above, and then left the room.

"I knew," Mr. Clay observed to his wife, "there would be some sparring at Dixon's to-night, and I made an errand and sent John down. He understands."

"I could not think what your object was in sending after nails to-night," Mrs. Clay replied, "when you sent by me this afternoon to the squire's after them, and I brought home ten pounds."

"O, nails always come right. I could not think of any thing else we wanted; and so I told John he might get on to Jerry and go to Dixon's to get a couple of pounds of board nails, and that he might stay a while if there should be any excitable conversation going on."

"I suppose you consider yourself paid by the report John has brought back?" Mrs. Clay said.

"I am not at all disappointed at hearing what he says. I knew the colonel was sore, and I expected to hear from him through Dixon and his tribe."

"I suppose," Mrs. Clay said, "we must expect to have trouble; but I hope it will not be very disastrous. I have strong confidence in the good sense of our people and in the strength of their attachment to Mr. Eldridge. It is not uncommon, we know, for a few people to be uneasy in a parish and for such to attempt to make disturbance. We have been as much blessed in having as little of this kind of trouble as almost any other parish with which I am acquainted."

"I hope we shall get along with this business better than I fear," Mr. Clay said. "I feel that Mr. Presbury is very much excited about this tax, and that he will in some way or other make all the trouble which he can. That he will have influence over many there can be no doubt; and if he be not reconciled in some way he will undoubtedly exert all his influence, I fear, to displace Mr. Eldridge."

"I suppose," Mrs. Clay remarked, "he will attempt to vent his feelings in that way; but it will be very wicked in him to do this. Mr. Eldridge is not to blame for what the parish does."

"No, not in the least. But the colonel reasons that, if Mr. Eldridge had not moved in the matter of paying that old parish debt, it would not have been paid, and so he would not have been taxed; and that, if Mr. Eldridge had not brought up the subject of repairing the meeting house, the people would not have thought of so doing. He thus blames Mr. Eldridge for being the cause of these two things, which take from him considerable money; and so, I fear, he means to punish Mr. Eldridge and others by making a strong move to have him dismissed."

"O, well, if the people stand firm, I do not think he will be able to accomplish much," said Mrs. Clay.

"Of course he will not," Mr. Clay said; "but a man like the colonel can weaken the firmness of some men. The danger is, if the colonel takes a bold stand, and it be known that he is opposed to Mr. Eldridge and desires his dismission, that others, in some fitful moment of displeasure, will join him; and, being once committed, they cannot retrace their steps, however they might desire to do this when cool reflection comes to their aid. This danger I have apprehended ever since it came to our ears that the colonel was disturbed about the parish debt; and I have talked to you before in a manner similar to my present mode of expression."

"O, yes, dear, I know you have; but, then, I ever looked upon the possibility of the colonel's really starting as remote, and did not treasure up your fears as I am now inclined to do."

* * * * * * *

In accordance with the parish vote, the committee forth-

with proceeded to put it into execution. Having visited several churches, both in city and country, and consulted different architects, they at length determined on a plan, and an energetic master workman had the enterprise in hand. When he first began on the interior of the church materials were being collected by an eminent musical establishment for the construction of the organ ; and in less than seven months from the vote to repair the work was accomplished. Through the skilful and most judicious management of the committee, the entire revolution in the aspect was so pleasing to all, and the pay day was so adroitly set, that nothing was heard by way of dissatisfaction. The organ, too, took charmingly ; and even Mr. Otis was heard to say — though he made the remark when he was not aware that certain ears were near — that it was a capital thing in Mr. Eldridge to put the people up to this thing. The colonel, too, inasmuch as the house had been beautified to his acknowledged satisfaction, and at an expense below his computation, without, as yet, any call from his purse, could talk of the improvements with composure and even with some degree of pride. All were so pleased that Mr. Dixon's store was even for a while silent about "breaking up the parish," &c., and every one almost felt and said their parish was about the best in the land. The new and splendid clock which had not been thought of when the vote to repair was taken, nor while the work was in progress, but which had been presented and put in its appropriate place before the eye of the preacher when the carpets were being put down by the generosity of Mr. Charles Davidson, had a wonderful effect in removing the chill from many hearts, and in putting smiles on many faces which had been cold and sullen for months.

However, notwithstanding the expense attending these

things was gradually paid, yet in the course of two years each man knew how much he had been taxed and had paid for the repairs of the church. Then old feelings, which many thought were extinguished, began to appear in a few. The colonel was often heard to utter hard things. Mr. Dixon's store rang again with dark sayings; and fear was on many hearts that trouble might yet come.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DEACON'S SON.

The happy influence exerted by Mr. Eldridge over the lambs of the flock was not among the slightest reasons which fostered the attachment of the people to their pastor. In the fear that might have arisen in any minds that they might be called to surrender him, either at the call of another station, or of death, or through discord and strife, almost the first thought would be, "What would our children do? what a loss it would be to the young of the parish!" Thus were Deacon Smith and his wife frequently heard to express themselves.

Whilst the pastor was useful among the young, and his usefulness acknowledged universally in the parish to be great, he was at the same time felt to be useful to all classes. His church always had food from both his preaching and conversation, and those who were not among the followers of the Master he served felt that he was of great service to them in different ways.

It was the practice of Mr. Eldridge to exert himself in every way he could for the benefit of his entire people. Whenever he saw that he could do good, he uniformly attempted to test his ability. He thought he beheld in the oldest son of Deacon Smith indications of feeling which were far from being promising. Indeed, he had heard from different sources that his conduct was not

only of evil tendency to himself, but to others by whom he was known and with whom he associated. He mentioned his fears to the parents, and they each acknowledged that what the pastor had observed in their child had already caused them immense pain. They entreated their pastor's interposition with their son. He informed them it was his purpose to seek an opportunity for conversation with him. To this they urged, and thanked him heartily for having previously thought of thus doing.

This son was just rising to manhood. Another year would give him his freedom. There were in him the elements of a character which might render him of great service to the community. No expense had been withheld by his parents in his education. Though he had been opposed to a collegiate course, yet the schools he had attended had given him almost, if not entirely, the accomplishments which would have been his had he graduated at any of our colleges. All along his parents and friends had strong hopes that he would be a leader in all that was good in society and be its great blessing. He had ever been a favorite both with those of his own age and with others, and his influence was consequently large. It was therefore to be expected that to such a pastor as Mr. Eldridge his early promise should be known and his ripening character be an object of lively interest. A good and watchful pastor always sees the centres of influence, and is deeply anxious that such should be sound and healthful. He is much around such to add to these strength and direction. By reason of his vigils he saw in young Smith what greatly distressed him; for he feared for the results of certain developments if not speedily removed, both on himself and on those over whom he had great sway. He therefore sought, and at length found, a suitable opportunity for the expression of his fears and the interposition of his counsels. Knowing that his subject was of a spirited

temperament, he proceeded cautiously and warily; and, in his first interview, was encouraged by the frank acknowledgments of his young friend that his course had not been approved by his own mind and conscience, and his ready promise to amend, to anticipate that his interposition would not be in vain. The deacon, seeing the pastor soon after this interview, met him with tears of joy, and warmly thanked him for his fidelity to his son, and expressed to him a conviction that good had already been done, and that the child would yet be to him all that he had hoped. The pastor continued to keep his eye out upon the young man, and his ear open to that which was said of him by those who had better opportunities than his own for knowing his downsitting and uprising. From both of these sources of knowledge he soon became again disturbed; and it was not long ere he had a second interview with the young man. By reason of his former acknowledgment and promise, and because, after both, he was not improved, the pastor was somewhat discouraged. He manifested this feeling, and young Smith appeared to be troubled by it. Such was his expression, so fair, so sincere, so sensible did he manifest himself that his course, if persisted in, would despoil him of a good name, rob him of all salutary influence, make him a pest in community, and withal cloud the horizon of his affectionate parents, and make it all night in the home of his childhood and youth, that Mr. Eldridge allowed himself again to feel that there yet was strong reason for hope that his young friend would fortify himself against temptation, and retrace his steps, and be a strong stay for his parents and a useful member of community. With such feelings he parted from him. However, a few weeks brought to Mr. Eldridge's heart greater sorrow on account of the young man than it had previously experienced, and he once more gained a place by his side for the purpose

of another effort to save him. When the pastor affectionately inquired of his progress in the promised work of reform the young man endeavored to report favorably, and might have succeeded with a less faithful friend in leaving the impression that this reform was advancing rapidly towards the most complete consummation. As Mr. Eldridge inquired about this step and that in his course, of which in his vigilance he had gained knowledge, a crimson hue might be seen on the countenance of his friend, significative of confusion and shame, and there might be heard from his lips a strong denial of the allegations suggested and an earnest assertion of his innocence. When his assertions were confronted with the testimony of faithful witnesses and there was no power to gainsay or resist them, then the young man, as if in the hands and under the guidance of a power from which all that is evil in our world has arisen, sent forth torrents of wrath and cursing upon the friend by his side for his interference in business which was not his own, and menaced him sorely that such conduct of his would be visited upon him with consequences far from being pleasant and desirable. Why all this change in demeanor, was to Mr. Eldridge, at first, a mystery. He had not been rough with his friend nor unkind. True, he had faithfully depicted to him the end of the way he was travelling. True, he had detailed many scenes of pain and suffering he would pass through before reaching this end, such as his being abandoned by refined, virtuous, and respectable society, and his identity with vice and profligacy; but his every look, and word, and tone were nothing but love, and denoted nothing but a deep and tender interest in his highest welfare. As he sat hearing peal after peal of abuse and defiance, the pastor thought he could penetrate the mystery which this conduct at first created by the supposition that it was his mighty effort to rid himself of reproof, and that he had

reached the turning point of his career. The subsequent history of the young man proved that the pastor was correct.

It was some weeks before the pastor met Deacon Smith. He had designed calling upon him, but had been prevented by the imperious call of other duties. He wished to sympathize with the father and to condole with him in an affliction which he had tried faithfully to avert, but which had come in despite of all human power to prevent. It was not at the deacon's house where Mr. Eldridge met him, but in the street. As he approached him, and whilst extending the warm hand which had ever before met a hand equally warm in congratulations on meeting, Mr. Eldridge thought he discovered a look about the deacon which was uncommon to him. Unsuspecting that the changed look was the effect of alienated feeling towards the pastor, — conscious that his whole course towards himself and family had ever been prompted by the purest friendship and most sacred fidelity, and believing that he had the warm approval and gratitude of the deacon for all that he had endeavored to accomplish, — Mr. Eldridge had no doubt that the present strange demeanor of his friend was the product of sorrow from the conduct of his son. Accordingly he soon alluded to him, supposing that his feelings were absorbed in reflections upon him. Instead of relaxing under the tender tones of the pastor and the expression of his warmest sympathy, as would be natural did the strange manner grow out of trouble from this source, his bearing grew more stiff and indifferent. Of this the guileless pastor thought nothing more than that his troubles had a deep effect upon him; and he continued pouring into the deacon's ear, and, as he supposed, his heart likewise, all that rich consolation which the gospel so abundantly administers to the afflicted. Whilst he was thus engaged the deacon uttered rarely a sentence; and

they at length separated, the deacon and pastor going to their respective homes.

Upon his arrival at his house Mr. Eldridge entered his sitting room, in which there happened at the time to be no one present, and seated himself in a rocking chair, where he remained some moments in profound meditation. At length his wife came in; and, finding him resting his head on his hand, which was his frequent practice when pensive and thoughtful, she observed,—

"O, I did not know that you had returned, husband; what is the matter now?"

"I have seen Deacon Smith, and I cannot keep him out of my mind. I fear the conduct of his son will be almost too much for him," Mr. Eldridge said. "I endeavored to console him; but, poor man! I am afraid he is inconsolable."

"I am very glad," Mrs. Eldridge remarked, "that you have seen him. I have been much tried at the circumstances which have prevented your calling there before; for I knew that both the deacon and his wife would be very anxious to see you."

"Ah, well, I do not think that any thing man can do can be of service to the deacon; poor, disappointed, most afflicted man!" Mr. Eldridge continued. "I hardly ever met with an individual whom trouble had so greatly changed. *He did not appear like Deacon Smith.* If I had not been aware of his great trial, and were I but slightly acquainted with him, I should have thought *that he was very sullen.*"

"*That cannot be said of Deacon Smith*, husband, *that he is sullen*," Mrs. Eldridge said. "His feelings are so acute that he does not act like himself; and no wonder. Robert is his oldest son; he has made great calculations upon him; and to have him conduct as he does is a most severe trial. The deacon has never had any trial before from

his family. There has been very little sickness in his family, and never a death; and this takes hold upon him most effectually."

"Yes, it does, poor man!" Mr. Eldridge said. "I wish I could do something for him; but I feel that I cannot. I most sincerely pity him."

In this way did the pastor express himself of his *poor, afflicted* deacon; and whilst this conversation was going on at the parsonage, let us see the deacon at home. There was visiting at his house for a few days a lady who was much attached to her pastor, and one who was generally beloved for her many virtues throughout the parish. She had long been on very intimate acquaintance at the deacon's, and was regarded and treated by all the family rather as one of their own number than as a common friend.

When the deacon came home his appearance was as usual. There was the same pleasant smile on his countenance and the same readiness at pleasantry which were usual to him. His wife, as was her custom when he returned from the village, inquired after the individuals he had met. In reply to her questions he mentioned over a number of persons with whom he had had a few words.

"Did you see any thing of Mr. Eldridge?" Mrs. Smith asked.

With a sudden change of voice and manner he replied, "I rather think *the man thinks he has seen me.*"

"Why, husband," said his wife, in painful astonishment, "did not you promise me that you would not talk angrily with Mr. Eldridge when you met him?"

"Well," said the deacon, "I have kept my promise. I did not say an angry word to him; but I rather guess I let him know that I don't like to have our Robert talked to as he did the other day."

"Why, Mr. Smith! I wonder at you. How could you do any thing to wound the feelings of such a good and devoted

minister as Mr. Eldridge? After what you told me I have rested easy, thinking you would not let Mr. Eldridge know that you felt injured. You know you have not the least cause for feeling hard towards him. You have told Robert time and again, and so have I, *the very same things and worse things* than Mr. Eldridge did; and I think it is very unreasonable in you to blame him in the least for what he has said. You requested Mr. Eldridge to see Robert, and to exert himself all that he could to save him, and he has been faithful; and, instead of your feeling hard about him, you ought to feel most grateful."

"Well, I don't like to have a man tell my son that he is in danger of being a pest in the community, of being shunned by all respectable people," the deacon said, "when there is no call for it. Mr. Eldridge knows that Robert has done much better since he had his first conversation with him; and if he had let him alone after that all would have been well, and I should ever have been grateful to him."

"We know, husband," said Mrs. Smith, "that our minister is not a rash, but a very prudent man. He never says any thing until he is satisfied his duty calls him to speak. I have no doubt all that he said to Robert was called for. Mr. Eldridge would not have said any thing to him unless his judgment and conscience urged him, I am persuaded."

"You know how Robert feels towards Mr. Eldridge," the deacon said. "He feels that he has abused him, and I think he has good reason for feeling so."

"No, you do not, husband; you do not; for you have said to Robert and to me, many times, the very things which Mr. Eldridge did, and you said more. You did not think you were abusing the child when you said them, nor did I; nor do I now think that Mr. Eldridge has abused him. How did Mr. Eldridge appear when you saw him to-day?"

"O, I don't know. He appeared as usual, I suppose," the deacon said. "I felt so, I did not pay much attention to know how he appeared."

"I think you are very much out of the way, my dear husband, in feeling as you do towards our faithful pastor."

"Perhaps I am," the deacon said; "but I do not think so. I think Mr. Eldridge has done very wrong, indeed, in saying any thing to make Robert so angry. I am really afraid what he has said to him will be the means of his ruin. I am not reconciled to such conduct. I never can be."

"O husband! It grieves me to hear you talk so."

It was very unfortunate for the deacon that he did not give ear more to his wife and less to his son. The truth was, the son was on the highway to ruin, whilst the blinded eye of the father could not see him as thus exposed. Strong affection, unwillingness to have it so, credulity at the deceptive sayings of the child combined to close the eye of the parent to the real course of his son, and to make his ear heavy that he could not hear from faithful witnesses what this course really was. Had he sought an interview with his pastor, according to the desire of his wife that he should, and, in the exercise of candor and confidence in the fidelity of the man whom he had hitherto almost adored, borne himself whilst this interview lasted, the deacon would have been as wise as his pastor in relation to matters involving the momentous interests of the child. Had the pastor suspected the possibility of the father's being ignorant of the facts which he discovered through his own affectionate vigilance, had he thought it possible that his own interest in a parishioner could transcend the interest of a parent in the child, of course Mr. Eldridge could at once have given the deacon both light and knowledge which might have put new feelings in his

soul, and thereby softened the asperity of manner which the pastor charitably mistook for the effects of deep sorrow. The best men sometimes err; therefore it must not be accounted marvellous that a *deacon* should do what is improper. Had Deacon Smith only mentioned to his pastor when he met him in the street the state of his feelings, Mr. Eldridge in a few words would have disabused him of his prejudice, were he willing to allow facts and evidence their convincing power. But alas for poor human nature! affection for an erring child had made him his helper in vice, and induced him to sympathize with the child in his wrath towards the faithful friend who had endeavored to interpose and save the one from ruin and the other from the keenest sorrows. However strange it may seem that the confidence in and love and respect for the pastor which had been strengthening for nearly twenty years should be at once destroyed, and in their place be rancor and prejudice of no common character, yet such was the revolution in the breast of the deacon. His discerning and amiable wife did much to keep the new feelings which had entered her husband's heart in abeyance; but *she was not always with him*, nor did the recollection of her entreaties always overcome him to silence when abroad. Though for months he did not speak out so that the community became advised of his alienated feeling, yet there were those in the parish who were apprised of its existence. Somehow or other, Colonel Presbury and the deacon grew more intimate. Goods came *oftener* from Dixon's store than formerly, and numberless little things, in a small, stifled utterance, for a year or two whispered that all was not just right with the deacon. The pastor, however, knew nothing of the change. When he called at the deacon's, Mrs. Smith, through fear her husband might say or do what would express his real feelings, would be all attention to the pastor; she really lived for

his real worth; and the deacon had sense enough to restrain himself so that a discrepancy in feeling between husband and wife would not be manifest. So the pastor never dreamed that an enemy was in ambush before him or that the deacon was changed from what he had ever been. This kind of wary management was as successful generally in the parish in concealing the real state of the deacon's feelings. Even Colonel Presbury was charged, and solemnly promised to give no publicity to the secret unless by permission. Save, therefore, a certain few, the community for much time knew nothing of the true state of the deacon's feelings.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DONATION PARTY.

Whilst Mr. Eldridge had so deep a place in the affections of his people as the preceding chapters must have shown, it would have been singular if he were not often remembered by the families of his parish at those times when the favor of a propitious Providence had given them an exuberant supply for their own necessities. He was thus remembered. The farmers did this when their fields contained the articles which are every day needed for the table where the wants of the body are satisfied. The few manufacturers who were here and there in his territory did this; and scarcely a single household in the parish omitted in the course of every year to make the pastor or his family some present with which to manifest their affection and esteem.

Aside from these informal and private acts of generosity, it had ever been the practice of his people to go *en masse* once a year to the house of their pastor to tender their kind congratulations, and to leave in his family that which would tell in the wardrobe, or on the table, or in the library. These annual visitations were *something more* than occasions for allowing the people to have a good time at the parsonage, regardless of the injury to carpets, paint, furniture, which often accompanies indifferent assemblages for fun and frolic which has marked some

donation visits of which we have heard. The parishioners of Mr. Eldridge never incurred the charge of eating all that they carried, and of leaving nought but the fragments to testify of their respect and love for their pastor. If the disposition thus to do had appeared in many it would have been rebuked by the ruling spirits, which were powerful, by their judicious and commendable counsel to have the donation visit always amount to something of substantial benefit to the pastor. It was well known what Squire and Mrs. Davidson, and others like them, considered the proper demeanor on these occasions, and likewise that it would not escape the eyes of Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Clay, and others, what was carried to the parsonage, and *what remained there, too*, after the company had mostly retired. By reason of these influences there was ever an anxiety and care on the part of every family to have their gift of an *appropriate*, and therefore of a *serviceable*, character.

In the nineteenth year of his pastorate the people made Mr. Eldridge a donation visit, which was like the others which had preceded it — a gathering of the multitude. Smiling countenances, heavy baskets and boxes, full barrels and bags, and large bundles were all there as usual. Till an hour or two had passed after the company was made up it was not discovered but that *all the people* were there likewise. When, however, the novelty and excitement of the scene were over, and it became a matter of comfort for those who were there to sit rather than stand, when the time came for "taking observations," it was discovered that several of the people who had heretofore always been prominent on these occasions were absent. Squire Davidson, of course, was not present; for all knew and greatly lamented his failing health. But why Colonel Presbury, Deacon Smith, and one or two others were absent, was a matter of wonderment to the largest part of the company. Mrs. Smith was there, and it was remarked

by some that the wagon in which she rode was unusually freighted with good things for the pastor and his family; but why the *hired man*, and not the husband, was her attendant, seemed greatly to confuse the many. Although Mrs. Smith had ever been prominent on these occasions, being one of the few charged with the general superintendence, yet at this time her activity transcended its usual boundary. This circumstance was noticed, and made the subject of remark, in many circles about the house. It was considered that her attachment to her pastor grew more and more strong, because her attentions to him were so many and so marked. It being no place for seeking an explanation of the deacon's absence, when it was generally understood that he was in town and in health, and that he had been seen "up in town" by many just before they came to the parsonage, those who were inquisitive for the cause did not attempt to gratify their curiosity, but became engrossed with the scenes that were versatile about them.

Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Clay, and Mrs. Howard, being leading characters at this gathering, frequently were in consultation in relation to sundry arrangements for the evening. The entire parsonage being thrown open to the people, these ladies felt at liberty to enter any room which might be best suited for their purpose. When need of counsel and especial care had ceased, towards the close of the evening, Mrs. Smith indicated to Mrs. Clay and Mrs. Howard that their company would afford her peculiar pleasure; and, herself leading the way, the three went together to the study of the pastor to commune one with another, with none to disturb.

"This has been a most *trying* evening to *me*," Mrs. Smith remarked. "It has cost me the greatest effort to restrain my feelings; for I have felt that probably *this would be the last donation visit* our dear pastor would ever receive from our people."

"What has occurred of late to make you thus conclude?" Mrs. Clay inquired. "Colonel Presbury's forces are not increasing, I hope."

"I fear they are," Mrs. Smith replied; "and ——"

The sentence was not finished, by reason of the excessive weeping of Mrs. Smith. Soon, however, she rallied, and continued, "The thought is too much for me. I was going to observe that my husband was as much opposed to Mr. Eldridge as Colonel Presbury is."

The effect of this announcement on Mrs. Clay and Mrs. Howard may be conceived. It overpowered conversation for a moment, and the three sat pensive and sad. At length Mrs. Howard said, —

"*It cannot be* that your husband has become an enemy to our pastor."

Mrs. Smith, in explanation, proceeded to state that Colonel Presbury had sent a large number of logs to her husband's mill, of late, to be sawed into boards, and that he had been there himself frequently to see about them. Consequently her husband and the colonel had been much together.

"The conduct of our son," she continued, "is no secret to either of you. Our pastor, like a faithful shepherd, had watched the youth and detected symptoms of his unpromising course. Calling one day at our house, he very tenderly and delicately alluded to the subject. Both Mr. Smith and myself were very grateful to him for his sympathy, and we each entreated him to endeavor to impress upon Robert the danger he was in, and try to save him. He replied that he had been seeking a convenient opportunity for a conversation with him; and we both thanked him for his thoughtfulness in our behalf. He soon had an interview with Robert, and we thought the effect of his conversation with him was very salutary, and we were encouraged to hope that a reformation would ensue. The interview with

Robert was repeated twice or thrice. The last time that Mr. Eldridge conversed with him he was very plain with him; and, in consequence of his fidelity, Robert became very much enraged, and came home with a long story to his father, which much affected my husband. Mr. Smith at once sympathized with the boy, took his part, and severely censured Mr. Eldridge. I could not think that our pastor had done wrong, though I could not see then the occasion for his saying many things which he did. However, I was disposed to wait, before I blamed Mr. Eldridge, until I had seen him and heard from his own lips his reasons for his course. My husband would not hear to my suggestions, but gave himself up entirely to sympathy with Robert. It was not long before I saw our pastor, and was entirely satisfied that he had pursued the only course which the circumstances of Robert's case pointed out to one who would endeavor to serve him. I never had better evidence of his interest in our family, and certainly never before felt under more obligations to him, both as a pastor and a friend, than I did when he was giving me an account of our Robert's conduct and his efforts to save him from utter ruin. I thought I would not hint to him that my husband felt himself injured, and I presume *he does not now know but that he is as friendly to him as formerly.*"

"I should have thought," Mrs. Clay remarked, "that the deacon would have waited with yourself for an interview with Mr. Eldridge before he condemned him."

"He ought to have done so," Mrs. Smith replied; "and I tried hard to induce him to wait, and not blame our pastor as he did in the presence of Robert. But my efforts were of no avail. He did not appear to believe it possible that Mr. Eldridge could have had sufficient reasons for talking to our son as he did. He said that he *knew* Robert was not as bad a boy as Mr. Eldridge had

represented. O, I fear that something will be done that will pain many a heart in our parish and greatly distress our good minister."

"The deacon, then," said Mrs. Howard, "has never manifested to Mr. Eldridge his displeasure?"

"No, I presume not," was the reply. "He promised me," said Mrs. Smith, "that he would not say any thing to Mr. Eldridge or any one else on the subject; and doubtless he is now entirely ignorant that his 'good deacon,' as he calls him, is a bitter enemy."

It was remarked above that Deacon Smith was seen by some of the company in the village as they were proceeding to the parsonage. He informed his wife in the afternoon that *important business* would prevent his accompanying her to the parsonage in the evening. So after fitting her out, which he did very freely and pleasantly, he took another horse and carriage and proceeded to the place where his *important business* was to be transacted. This place was *at the house of Colonel Presbury*. It had been arranged that a party should there meet — if three or four can be called a party — to deliberate and advise in relation to an *end* on which the colonel and the deacon had determined to reach. Whilst, therefore, the great body of the people were joyous in their manifestations of regard to a faithful pastor in the parsonage, and dreaming of no threatening danger to the permanency of the tie which had for years bound them so happily together, Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury, with one or two others, were holding a caucus to concert measures for the destruction of this tie and for separating this devoted minister from his attached flock! In this way it is that clouds suddenly gather in a pastor's horizon. The sun goeth down clearly, and before midnight there is a tempest. Deacon Smith probably had forgotten how warmly he had expressed himself in favor of his pastor, and that

he had most indignantly rejected the suggestion, pleasantly and jocosely made, that perhaps Colonel Presbury would have him for a coadjutor in the nefarious work of retaliating on the pastor.

The deacon's party having completed the business for which they met before any began to leave the parsonage, he was at home when his good wife returned. Although she could not be happy, even when thronged by the multitude who were variously testifying ardent love for one she so highly valued, yet she remained to be one of the last who left for home.

How many, on reaching their own abodes, and when musing on the scenes of the evening, made any attempts to conjecture the reasons which occasioned the absence of Colonel Presbury and Deacon Smith from the parsonage, is not known. Doubtless the subject was agitated in many a household circle, and an attempt made to reach the cause of this remarkable event. What passed at the parsonage and at Mr. Clay's was treasured up.

"How happened it, husband," Mrs. Eldridge asked, "that Colonel Presbury and Deacon Smith were not here this evening?"

"That is what I have thought of with much anxiety," Mr. Eldridge replied. "I asked Mrs. Smith why her husband was not with us; and I thought she betrayed some trouble as she replied that he was prevented by an engagement."

"I confess," Mrs. Eldridge continued, "if it was not *Deacon Smith, whom we know so well as a very firm friend*, that I should suspect something was wrong. He has always been at our donation visits and been very active, and it seems very strange that he was away to-night. However, I presume he had some business which came upon him very suddenly, or he would have been here."

"It seems to me," said Mr. Eldridge, "that, if this had

been the reason, he would have sent us a special message to such an effect. From the troubled manner of his wife when I alluded to his absence, I have thought that the deacon might have been here had he been disposed."

"O, I cannot think there was any *disinclination*," Mrs. Eldridge replied. "*Deacon Smith is not the man to turn so suddenly.* Mrs. Clay told me that the deacon's wagon never came to a donation party with so valuable a freight as it brought this evening. If he had been alienated towards us, that would not have been the case."

"It might have been," said Mr. Eldridge. "Mrs. Smith, you know, does as she pleases, and it may be that she had more put in the wagon for us on account of her husband's coldness. From what I know of her, I should think that such would be her course in the event of her husband's estrangement from us."

"I would not suffer myself, husband, for a moment, to think it probable that good Deacon Smith could ever feel differently towards us from what he has done."

"I cannot tell why it is; but it seems to me," said Mr. Eldridge, "that Deacon Smith was not here to-night because he did not wish to be. I have always considered the deacon to be one of our best friends, it is true, and I know of nothing that I have done which should make him otherwise now; but having had a pretty extended knowledge of mankind, and of deacons in particular, I have learned to feel that a deacon will take a sudden tack round against a pastor. I cannot think that Deacon Smith would do this; but it may be that I have been mistaken."

"I would not cherish the thought that Deacon Smith had become unfriendly to you," said Mrs. Eldridge. "*He is the last man to do this.* Only think how many people, both in and out of our parish, have told us what Deacon Smith has said in favor of his minister. He has been

exalting you, far and near, ever since you have been here, as being the best minister in the state; and *it would sound strangely* now to hear him talk differently from this. I would not, husband, allow myself to think it possible for such a man as Deacon Smith to turn against me."

"I know," replied Mr. Eldridge, "that all the past manifestations of the deacon towards me make it very improbable that he is unfriendly now; but then, after all, deacons have acted as strangely as all this."

"Well, husband, *if Deacon Smith is against you*, others will be soon. He has great sway here, you know."

"That he has," said Mr. Eldridge; "I am well aware of this. If the deacon is against me, I may as well think my days here are numbered and will soon be finished."

"If you feel that he is unfriendly," said Mrs. Eldridge, "I would call and see him, and know all about it."

"No, no, my dear wife; that is not my way. No one but yourself will ever know that such a thought is in my mind. I shall go on as ever, endeavoring to do my duty day by day, and shall not, either by word or deed, disclose to any one a fear that Deacon Smith may be opposed to me. I have already seen too many sad effects of pastors *helping* their people dismiss them in doing what you suggest. If Deacon Smith is opposed, he would be relieved should I introduce the subject to him. I have long made up my mind that, if ever there should be trouble in the parish, I would know nothing of it. My opponents shall never have any assistance from my words or actions with which they can the more easily accomplish their work. They shall have all the labor and all the pleasure."

After Mr. and Mrs. Clay arrived home, Mrs. Clay rehearsed to her husband the conversation of Mrs. Smith.

"Can it be," Mr. Clay said, "that Deacon Smith has left Mr. Eldridge?— the man he has praised so much, the man

he has considered almost the personification of perfection. Can it be that Deacon Smith is such a man?"

"We must, indeed, now admit this to be the fact," said Mrs. Clay, "Mrs. Smith being authority. It is sad to think of."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Clay; "if Deacon Smith is opposed to Mr. Eldridge, Colonel Presbury will probably know it, and the two will make serious trouble in the parish."

"There may be some little trouble," said Mrs. Clay; "but, then, it will not amount to much. There are enough here, without the colonel and the deacon, who are able and willing to stand by and support Mr. Eldridge."

"These two individuals will carry many with them," Mr. Clay said. "If they really undertake to dismiss our pastor, they will succeed, I have no doubt. I never supposed the colonel could do much unless he had some influential members of the church to work with him; and now, if he has the deacon on his side, I should not be surprised if we had a council here within a year for the purpose of dismissing Mr. Eldridge."

"How is it possible for the colonel and deacon to get a majority on their side," Mrs. Clay asked, "when now nearly all the people are satisfied with our pastor?"

"It is a very easy thing," said Mr. Clay, "for people to be friendly to a minister when there are no particular influences at work to make them otherwise. There are a great many fair-weather friends in a parish, who are always hid in a storm. The deacon and colonel will make a flurry, and it will not be six months before they will have on their side of the house a majority of voters in a parish meeting. They are now, or will soon be, at work with their minions. The deacon knows how the thing is done. They will do here as is done in other places when the effort is made to dismiss a minister. We shall have mis-

representation and lying about the minister, and all that species of conduct, which always succeeds in prejudicing certain minds against him."

"I cannot see as you do, husband," said Mrs. Clay. "I do not believe that our people will ever consent to part with Mr. Eldridge, let the colonel and deacon do what they may."

"I hope you are right," Mr. Clay replied; "but, then, I think you will acknowledge your mistake before many months."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PASTOR'S VISIT TO HIS NATIVE TOWN.

Within a few weeks from the donation visit described in the preceding chapter, Mr. Eldridge was called to his native town on business connected with the settlement of his father's estate. He was thus absent three weeks, being detained ten days beyond the period at which he contemplated returning when he left home by an unlooked-for concurrence of circumstances which transpired to oppose a more speedy adjustment of the business which it was his object to effect. It was unfortunate for him that his interest required him to be away from his parish *at this particular time*, when the colonel and the deacon were beating up volunteers to a war; for they had a far more favorable opportunity for succeeding in their nefarious object with the pastor out of town than they could have had had he been among his people.

Both the colonel and Deacon Smith now acted as if it was their purpose to effect the dismission of the pastor. They did not propose this publicly, nor at first even privately, to those with whom they sought opportunities for conversing on parochial matters; but they so expressed themselves as to *start* the fear or apprehension that Mr. Eldridge's hold on the affections of his people was giving way, and that *perhaps* some other minister might better unite the parish, and consequently be more generally useful. The dea-

con was a *wary* man. He well knew that he had unbounded influence, and it was not his purpose to do any thing by which this should be diminished. He was *determined* to have another pastor, and it was no very easy part for him to act — insidiously to undermine the popularity of Mr. Eldridge without the discovery of any that such was his object. Having been long acquainted with his pastor, he had discovered the weaker elements of his character, as all men, however eminent, have these; but the abounding excellences which the pastor's character contained having till now veiled these weaker elements, the deacon was not in the habit of thinking of them, and was never known to utter a word by which it could be conveyed that there was any thing about the pastor which was not exactly as it should be. Now, however, the deacon's object required that the whole character should be exposed; and if this only had been attempted there would have been nothing disclosed that would in the least have taken a particle of real excellence from the pastor or have prejudiced any mind against him. Whilst the deacon undertook to give certain minds which it was his desire to convert to his way of thinking some new light on Mr. Eldridge's public and private character, he went beyond the boundaries which real truth prescribed, and drew to his aid what lay in the boundless field of imagination, conjecture, and misrepresentation. He did not do this directly, so that any particular remark of his could be repeated as hostile to Mr. Eldridge; but he did it *in his own way*, coloring a little here, and making it light a little there, with a dexterous stroke, so that the picture would appear after his own desire, and yet he have no particular part in its drawing. We all know that this is often done, and that many a character has been thus tarnished when it would be difficult to charge home on the guilty offender the ways and the means adopted to effect the wicked deed. It cannot

be disguised, this part the deacon often acted to prejudice the people against the pastor. When he had left the impression he desired, or had prepared the way for a little further development, he was not long without an opportunity for striking another blow, which of course did, as it was designed, greater execution than the first attempt. In this way he succeeded with some, and without their consciousness, too, that such was his purpose, in alienating warm affections from the current where they had run ten or twenty years, and making it cold towards the pastor. The way would thus be opened for more direct conversation, which would be commenced by others than the deacon, when it would be conjectured that he, too, was not exactly satisfied with Mr. Eldridge, and that some other minister would better please him; and so the subject of his dismission began to be agitated.

Of course there was a report at head quarters of all conquests and of all circumstances which seemed to favor conquests. It would then be in the way for Colonel Presbury or some one else to follow in the wake of the deacon for the purpose of confirming the deacon's converts and assisting others leaning in the desired direction to fall and be in full ranks with the deacon and his company. Strange as it may appear, after this kind of manœuvring, in the short space of a few weeks many individuals who had almost worshipped their pastor were transformed and made ready to hail another minister. "The deacon of course knows; and, if he thinks so, there must be some foundation;" and so after the deacon many went, and with him as their guide they felt safe.

Before the return of Mr. Eldridge, the small parlor at Colonel Presbury's where the first meeting of the malcontents was held on the evening of the donation visit was too strait for the weekly conclave, the number had so much increased. It became necessary for the colonel to

open a larger room to accommodate those who were seeking the good of Zion and the welfare of Jerusalem. It was a part of the policy to invite *none* to this meeting until there was complete evidence that they were of *the right stamp;* and it was another part of the same policy that none who were present should make it known that these meetings were held, or that any movement was thought of for disturbing the pastoral relation. None, therefore, but the elect were aware that Mr. Eldridge's foundations were being shaken; and the multitude thought that all things relating to him were as prosperous as ever. So it is that a pastor thinketh there is no cloud in his horizon and the people at large see nothing but a bright and cheering firmament, when in reality a terrible storm menaces and shortly appears, confounding and distressing confiding ones and those who have long been happy under his various ministry.

Mr. Eldridge, while lingering in his native town to have events transpire for the completion of the business which called him thither, had a favorable opportunity to revive former friendships and to know all about the things relating to the church and parish with which his parents were connected, and for which he had ever cherished the most lively interest. He had not been long in the place nor seen but a few individuals before he became impressed that every thing was not as it should be with the incumbent of the pastoral office there. When he first began to hear from the lips of parishioners the sad tale of their sorrows and disappointments, he received their recital with distrust; for he was too wise in ecclesiastical concerns to be ignorant of the fact that a faithful pastor is often traduced when there is no just cause on which to found a charge. Indeed, so slightly was he affected by what he heard that he did not for some time admit the possibility that the sayings of the people could be true,

and he dismissed them from his mind as the tales of scandal or of gross misrepresentation. However, he thought at last he should know the estimate it would be proper to put on the gossip of the people when he could have the happiness to arrive at Deacon Babbit's; for towards this venerable man he had from childhood to the meridian of life had the greatest respect and affection. When Mr. Eldridge was a boy the name of Deacon Babbit ever drew forth homage and love from all the people; and the years that had passed since only increased the affection and confidence of every one towards him. He was a candid, guileless, and godly man; a man who honored and respected the ministry, and one who ever stood up with a square shoulder for the pastors who had been settled over the people with whom he was connected. Not only for his own ministers was he a support, but for all. He appreciated their situation. He knew its difficult and perplexing character; and from principle, as well as from feeling, he was the ready advocate of the minister. By reason of his influence and example many were induced to tread softly by the pastor's door and to make it as pleasant and as happy for him as possible. Could they who have been his ministers know the source whence many a benefaction came to their abode, could they know why it was that gossip about the minister and his family was of such a slender voice, and even that so unfrequently raised, then would they know more of the value of Deacon Babbit. If all the good things which his pastors received did not come directly from the house of this good man, it must be confessed the greater part of them would never have been carried to the parsonage had it not been for the sentiments it was ever his practice to instil into the people. Deacon Babbit was not thus impelled in his course towards ministers because he thought they were perfect men and unable to do wrong. He did not thus think. He had too much

good sense thus to think. Deacon Babbit thought ministers *could do right*, and that, as a general thing, they were full as consistent as other men ; and therefore he was their friend and supporter. He was, moreover, urged forward to throw around them his shield and to make their way pleasant, because he considered they were engaged in a most noble work and had to struggle against peculiar obstacles and trials. On this account he conceived that ministers were entitled to the support and sympathy of the people, and especially of those who were the professed disciples of the great Master of the minister. Because these were the sentiments of Deacon Babbit, and because they commended themselves to the conscience and intelligence of every man, he had great influence over the community in the treatment of ministers. Knowing all this, it is not strange that Mr. Eldridge thought it would be safe for him to form a judgment of the rumors that had reached him respecting the present pastor after he should have seen Deacon Babbit and heard from him the situation of parochial affairs.

In due time Mr. Eldridge paid the venerable deacon a visit. Though living nearly ten years beyond the appointed age of man, yet it was not manifest that the inner man was old and enfeebled. On the contrary, all there appeared sprightly and in vigor. It was cheering in the extreme to Mr. Eldridge to find his aged friend thus ; and it was a greater source of joy to him still to find him the same man that he had ever been, with the exception of the improvements accorded to him by grace and wisdom.

At a suitable period in his interview with the deacon Mr. Eldridge alluded to some of the rumors which he had heard since his arrival in town touching the minister of the place.

"Ah," the deacon said, "then they have been filling your ears respecting our parish matters. I am sorry

the people here are so imprudent as to talk so much about our minister. It is something new for them thus to do. I have thought our people were rather different in this respect from many parishes; but I am fearful they are losing their characteristic prudence. Some of the young people here have acquired a deep prejudice towards the minister, and they are not inclined to govern their feelings or their tongues as they should. They are to blame, I think, as well as the man against whom they talk so severely."

"I am pleased to hear you say this," Mr. Eldridge remarked. "I thought, from my slight acquaintance with Mr. Becket, that he was a good man and was inclined to do good."

"Yes; I believe our pastor to be a good man," the deacon said, "and I think he wishes to do good; but, then, the young people and others have some cause for being dissatisfied, I really think. But they have no excuse for talking about Mr. Becket as they do. They say many things which are utterly false."

"Well, deacon," Mr. Eldridge observed, "I have become somewhat interested since I have been here in your parish matters, and I should like to hear from you your opinion of Mr. Becket's course. I have not paid much attention to what has been told me; for I have seen that the people have been much excited, and I knew that all could not be true that I have heard."

"No, no," the deacon said; "not half of it is true, I dare say. As I said before, I believe our minister is a good man; but he is not a man of very enlarged views, I think. A very great cause of the trouble here has arisen from Mr. Becket's unwillingness to leave his old, beaten track. He thinks, I should judge from his conduct, that all the benefit which the people need his two services on the Sabbath are fitted to impart. Well, I have no doubt

that the people might be much more benefited than they have been if they had made it their business to derive all the good in their power from Mr. Becket's preaching. But I really think he has been unwise in not having meetings in the week time and in not giving the younger brethren an opportunity to exercise their gifts. That is what they want. They desire a meeting Sabbath evening, and they want one or two meetings during the week; and I think it would be well to gratify them."

"Certainly," said Mr. Eldridge; "I think so, decidedly: and I am astonished that Mr. Becket does not think so too. What reason can he give for not having such meetings?"

"All that I ever heard of his giving was, he was *afraid* of excitement. He did not wish to have the people become excited. Now, I think it would have been much better for the pastor, and people, too, to have had the excitement occasioned by frequent religious meetings than the *excitement* which now exists."

"There can be no doubt of that," Mr. Eldridge said. "The excitement which appears now I should take to be a very destructive feeling if I were your minister. I could not reasonably hope to be instrumental of much good whilst it continued."

"It is very strange that Mr. Becket did not see it," the deacon remarked. "He might have been the means of allowing much good to be done had he encouraged the young men and others who were for making efforts for the good of souls, and appointed meetings, so that they could have taken a part in the services. I have wondered how he could conscientiously refuse to have these meetings when he saw how strong the desire was for them. I should have thought he would have been very much pleased and encouraged by the feeling that called for them, and have done every thing in his power to make them interesting and profitable."

"Has he never had more than two services on the Sabbath?" Mr. Eldridge inquired. "Has he never had any Sabbath evening meetings or conference meetings during the week?"

"Yes, sir; sometimes, after he had been beset by the people to appoint more meetings, he would have a conference meeting Sabbath evening; but he would, in his zeal to prevent excitement, endeavor to do away the effect of the exhortations of the brethren; and this only made the matter worse. Because he has manifested opposition to what the brethren have said at these meetings they have been much displeased."

"I suppose I must consider all this true of Mr. Becket," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "because you are the witness, deacon. Had I heard the same elsewhere I should have been disposed to question the statement somewhat."

"I am much obliged to you," the deacon replied, "for your confidence. I never intended to slander any one, and especially a minister. I regret exceedingly that the truth requires as much as this to be said of our pastor. Had he been more ready to have had extra meetings, and treated the brethren whose pious feelings led them to ask for such with more kindness, I think the cause of religion would have prospered more here than it has."

"Undoubtedly," Mr. Eldridge replied. "Has Mr. Becket treated with unkindness the brethren who were anxious that greater efforts should be made for the advancement of piety here?"

"I fear he has," the deacon said. "Several of the brethren have repeatedly told me that he treated them with great coldness, and at some times with great harshness. From the manner in which I have heard Mr. Becket speak of these brethren, I have no doubt they have reason for saying what they do. I cannot think it is right for a minister to conduct in this way. It is wrong to offend any

man, and particularly to offend those individuals who are much engaged in the cause of religion, for no other reason than that they are thus engaged and desire to have all feel as they do. And then, again, it is wrong for a minister to neglect to have meetings when they are really called for by the people. It is discouraging to pious feeling, and it is hindering the advancement of true piety."

"That is very manifest," Mr. Eldridge said; "and I am much astonished that Mr. Becket has not seen all this himself."

"So am I," the deacon said. "I have often wondered how the man could be easy to see things going as they have been here for several years past. We have had no revivals, and but a very few have been added to the church. The congregation on the Sabbath has been dwindling away; and, if there is not an alteration soon, I see no reason why the church here will not become extinct and there be no interest in religion whatever. Already several families have left the society and go to another parish to meeting because of the position of Mr. Becket in relation to progress; and I am afraid others will do the same unless Mr. Becket either alters or goes away."

"Why can he be so unwise," Mr. Eldridge inquired, "as to do as he does? Why will he place obstacles in the way of revivals of religion and of the general progress of the church and parish?"

"Sometimes I have thought our brother Addison told the truth when he said, 'Mr. Becket does not wish for a revival here, because he would then have more labor to perform. His *laziness* is in the way.' That is a hard speech; but there is some truth in the remark. I think Mr. Becket is rather an indolent man; but I never say so here."

"He cannot expect to remain here long if he is aware the people feel towards him as you represent," Mr. Eldridge said.

"He has been told how people feel towards him; and I should think, if he had not been, he would think, from the empty pews, that there was not much interest in him among the people," the deacon said.

"What does he say for himself when he is informed that there is a desire that he should leave?"

"I am informed," the deacon replied, "that he does not make any conversation whatever with those who have informed him of the state of feeling here."

"How long since the first intimation was given him of this state of feeling?"

"Between three and four years," the deacon said. "I am told by some of the brethren that they have had conversation with him on the subject very often, as often as they dare to, and that it amounts to nothing at all."

"Does he never converse with you on the subject?"

"No, sir," the deacon said. "He never alluded to any dissatisfaction of the people with him in any of my interviews with him; and, as I knew he was informed of the matter, I have thought that I would not mention the subject to him. *Deacons are apt to run before they are sent* in these matters of difficulty; and I thought I would be still. I never yet quarrelled with a minister; and I am now too old to begin."

"You appear to have some knowledge of individuals who hold the same office in the church with yourself, I should judge by this last remark," Mr. Eldridge said.

"What do you refer to, sir? — my saying that deacons were apt to run to the minister who has difficulty in his parish and inform him that it is time for him to ask for a dismission before they are sent?"

"That is the remark," Mr. Eldridge said.

"That is true," the deacon said. "I have known of a number of instances of ministers being dismissed wholly for such a reason. People, when excited, said hard things

of their minister, and the deacons got wind of their sayings, and forthwith reported them to the pastor. Then the pastor would treat these individuals with *coldness* and *consider them enemies; and in this way* alienation would be fomented, and the end would be dismission."

"I see you understand it," Mr. Eldridge said. "Deacons are not all alike; but, then, I have no doubt *they often make matters worse by their interference.*"

"Yes, yes; that they do. I do not think a deacon ought to be more prominent in a parish difficulty with a minister than any other man. For my part, I never would be a *cat's paw for others.*"

"That is a very significant expression, deacon," Mr. Eldridge said. "It expresses the idea exactly. People sometimes wish to make a difficulty with their minister; they are ashamed to stir in the matter themselves, and so they go to a deacon and get him to go forward; and then they stand back and coolly look on, and it may be exult over the folly of their instrument."

"Yes, Mr. Eldridge, it is often just so; and I have often wondered that deacons would be made tools of for such infamous purposes."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PASTOR'S HORSE.

Although Mr. Eldridge had a salary equal to any other clergyman in a country town, — although his people had from time to time in the course of every year of his pastorate made him generous presents, — yet the aggregate of his receipts by no means relieved him from the necessity of rigid economy. He was one of those individuals who felt it to be a sacred duty to have an eye out for the future. It was his practice to lay by something every year which could be called to his aid in the event that he should be laid by from his professional labors by sickness or by age. Then, again, he had a rising family ; and he felt bound to care well for his children and give them all a thorough education. In doing this he was at no small expense. Two of his sons had already received a collegiate education, and his daughters had been absent for years in attendance upon school. So, for the payment of the bills accruing from these sources, it is apparent no small sum would be required. Then, again, there were the calls upon him by the benevolent organizations of the age, which it was a pleasure and a privilege to him to heed. His library, too, from year to year made drafts upon him which he could not on any account dishonor. His health required of him that he should at times relax his severe pursuits and seek its renewal in travel ; and here

was no small outlet for his money. In addition to all these expenses must be mentioned those which arose from the feeding and clothing of his family and in the entertainment of company, with which, in no small share, he was blessed. The manner in which Mr. Eldridge met these various expenses had all along been to his people a source of pride and pleasure, and various were the remarks in approval of his course from every part of his parish which were treasured up in his memory. He was always applauded by the many, and never loudly condemned by the few, for his economy; and this trait of his character was almost universally regarded as one of great value.

It is to be remembered that parishioners are not *under bonds* to continue their approval of excellence in their pastor. There is a right *reserved* suddenly to change and to condemn as strongly as it was ever their practice to applaud. If individuals, therefore, had for years lauded the pastor for his economy, it is no marvel if they turn right about and condemn the man for his meanness and contractedness. "It is all fair in politics;" and it is no less so in ministerial matters when the object is to displace a faithful pastor to gratify the caprice or the will of a factious few, who are determined on revenge, or who have taken it upon themselves to secure another minister more to their own particular taste.

A minister cannot be dismissed without cause; that is a *settled* matter. If a people should be guilty of such an act, they would receive the unmeasured condemnation of the whole community. A minister cannot be dismissed *without the people are dissatisfied with him*, unless he chooses to go away; then if a few wish to displace him they must have some cause — they must show dissatisfaction. If there be none to exhibit, some must be *manufactured* for the purpose. This very business Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury are now doing. They have been at work

hard at it for several weeks, as the reader has been apprised in preceding chapters. They are turning their pastor over and over. They are going back to his ordination, and are carefully looking over every succeeding year in search of something out of which to manufacture material. Contemptible business, the reader thinks. No doubt of that; but it is a fact, notwithstanding; and if the business was confined to Mr. Eldridge's parish, perhaps it would not be well to expose it. Charity might suppose it would be repented of there, and fruits worthy of repentance be exhibited. However, this business is not thus restricted. It has for many years been extensively carried on; and the fruits thereof are many, as the community are well aware.

"I really wish our minister would get him a new horse," said Colonel Presbury, as he was conversing in the street with Mr. Bangs whilst Mr. Eldridge rode by.

"Why, what is the matter with the one he now has?" Mr. Bangs inquired.

"O, I think that horse is a disgrace to the parish," the colonel replied; "and I have heard others say the same."

"I don't know about that," Mr. Bangs said. "I don't see but that the animal looks as well as he ever did. Mr. Eldridge has had him ten or twelve years, I believe: and I *never heard any one say any thing against him before.*"

"Well, I have," the colonel said; "and there are many who feel that Mr. Eldridge does not do right to drive such a horse when his salary and presents enable him to keep a better one."

"Mr. Eldridge's horse is a better looking animal than half the horses about town," Mr. Bangs said; "and he is a good, faithful old creature. If I was in Mr. Eldridge's place I would not part with him. Mr. Eldridge has ways enough for his money without buying every new horse that comes along. For my part, I am glad he makes his

horses last so long; and I hope the one he has now will stand him these five years yet."

"Don't you think, Mr. Bangs, a minister ought to consult the feelings of his parish, and not disgrace them abroad by appearing as though he wasn't half supported?"

"Why, yes; if a minister has a good salary he ought to appear respectably, I think. Does not Mr. Eldridge appear well enough, I should like to know?"

"I do not know but the man appears well enough; but I really think people out of town must think from the looks of his horse that we don't do well by him."

"If people out of town think so, I should suppose I should have heard something about it before. I am in neighboring towns pretty often, and I often hear Mr. Eldridge spoken of, and well spoken of too. I never heard a word said about his horse. I think his horse is good enough for him or for any one else. Mr. Eldridge cannot afford to be fanciful about a horse or any thing else. He has a large family and an expensive one; and I think he must find it difficult to do as he does with no more income than he has from our people. You must know, colonel, eight or ten hundred dollars don't go far in supporting many families here who have not half the number of necessary calls for money that our minister has. There's our doctor, with but two children; he says he cannot get along without spending fifteen hundred dollars a year. I don't think he or his family appear any better than our minister and his family. As for the doctor's horses, neither of them is so good an animal as Mr. Eldridge's."

"O, well," the colonel said, "the doctor is not *supported* by the parish, and he can do as he pleases. No one has any right to interfere with his matters."

"I don't know," Mr. Bangs said, "as any one has any right to interfere with our minister's matters. If any one earns his money by hard work, I think Mr. Eldridge does.

For my part, I think he ought to be better paid than he is, and that no one ought to find fault with him for not having a more expensive horse, or for any thing else. I wonder how he can make his salary go as far as he does."

After a few other remarks Mr. Bangs and the colonel parted, and whilst walking along Mr. Bangs met Mr. Cummings, when the latter gentleman immediately said,—

"Mr. Bangs, have you been called on to give any thing towards getting a new horse for our minister?"

"No; I have not. Are they going to give Mr. Eldridge a new horse? I have not heard any thing about it. If he wants a new horse, I am ready to do my part to give him one; but I think his present horse is able enough yet to do all his business."

"I never heard any thing about it before this morning," Mr. Cummings said. "I just met Deacon Smith, and he said some of the people thought Mr. Eldridge had driven his horse long enough, and that he had been a disgrace to the parish: and they were for subscribing to procure for him one which would be a respectable-looking animal."

"It seems to me," Mr. Bangs said, "*some people must have opened their eyes all at once.* I have just been conversing with Colonel Presbury, who has been running out at great length about the minister's horse. He seemed to be vexed that Mr. Eldridge had no more regard for the reputation of the parish than to drive such a horse. Now, it seems Deacon Smith thinks the same. *I should really like to know what all this means.* I have never heard any thing said before this morning that the minister's horse was not well enough. He certainly looks as well as he ever did."

"I don't know what it means, I confess," Mr. Cummings said. "I did not have any conversation with the deacon about the matter. I was in much haste, and did not stop to hear him talk two moments. I thought, however, he had a queer kind of a look with him when he asked me to

subscribe; and now, from what you tell me, I guess *he was not in earnest* about getting up a subscription. He must have been *joking*."

"It strikes me as a very singular circumstance," Mr. Bangs said, "that Colonel Presbury should talk as he did to me about the minister's horse, and that Deacon Smith should begin with you on the same subject. *I don't understand it.* If I did not know that Deacon Smith was *very friendly* to our minister, I should *mistrust* that there was some *under current* at work not of a very promising character."

"O, there can be nothing of that kind," Mr. Cummings said. "*The deacon would not do any thing to prejudice people against our minister.* You know how well he likes Mr. Eldridge."

Here the conversation was interrupted by a gentleman riding up to converse with Mr. Cummings. Mr. Bangs immediately left and proceeded homeward.

In a day or two from this period Mrs. Stimson and Miss Bemis called together upon Mrs. Bangs for the purpose of soliciting her subscription for the benefit of Mrs. Eldridge. Mrs. Stimson remarked that there had been much said among the people about the appearance of the minister and his wife; that it was a matter of mortification to many that Mr. Eldridge drove such a poor horse, and that his wife had worn the same old bonnet and shawl for eight or ten winters. Many individuals have thought that the salary which was paid the minister was amply sufficient to enable him to appear respectably, and that, as he was disposed to save his money and suffer himself and wife to go looking any how, it was time he had a *hint* that the people were not very well satisfied with such policy. The gentlemen, she said, were going to give him a new horse, and the ladies thought of presenting Mrs. Eldridge with a new shawl and bonnet.

"Dear me!" Mrs. Bangs remarked. "I am perfectly astonished. For my part, I did not know but that Mrs. Eldridge had a *new bonnet every winter;* and it was no longer ago than yesterday that I told my daughter, as I saw Mrs. Eldridge passing in the street, that I did not perceive that her shawl had *faded* in the least. It looked as well as ever. Now, I have no objection to making Mrs. Eldridge a present, — I should be happy in contributing for such an object, — but I cannot consent to give at this time for the purpose of *mortifying* my valued friend."

"We thought," Miss Bemis observed, "that almost every lady in the parish would be ready to do any thing to promote the respectability of the town. For my part, I think the people have reason to be displeased at the negligence manifested by the pastor and wife to their personal appearance."

"*How long have the people been thus sensitive* in relation to this matter?" Mrs. Bangs inquired. "*It cannot be a great while.* For my part, I never heard a single word on the subject before. If there had been any discontent at the bonnet and shawl of Mrs. Eldridge, or at the appearance of Mr. Eldridge's horse, it seems strange that I never heard of it before."

"Well, there is much dissatisfaction in respect to this matter, I assure you," Mrs. Stimson remarked. "I find the ladies willing to contribute for this object; and I have no doubt Mrs. Eldridge will have a new bonnet and shawl if you do not subscribe."

"I am sorry," Miss Bemis said, "that Mrs. Bangs is willing to have her minister's wife new trim her bonnet every winter, just to save the expense of purchasing a new one. I think it is disgraceful for her to do this."

"I do not see," Mrs. Bangs remarked, with much feeling, "that Mrs. Eldridge needs any hints from us to make her more particular about her dress. *There is no lady in town*

who dresses more becomingly, or who appears more neatly, than Mrs. Eldridge. If she is disposed to take good care of her things she is to be commended, and I have often heard *her commended* for her good taste and for her economy."

Here the conversation ended by the entrance of Mrs. Clay, who had called upon Mrs. Bangs; and both Miss Bemis and Mrs. Stimson withdrew.

As soon as Mrs. Bangs and Mrs. Clay were alone, the former related the conversation of the two ladies who had just left: when Mrs. Clay remarked, under the influence of the most painful feelings, —

"You are not aware, Mrs. Bangs, what all this means. I have never till now heard any thing about the shawl and bonnet; but I have about Mr. Eldridge's horse. It is all the same thing, I have no doubt, from the character of Mrs. Stimson and Miss Bemis. The fact is, Mrs. Bangs, there is an effort making by a few to create a prejudice against our dear pastor and have him dismissed."

"How you talk, Mrs. Clay!" Mrs. Bangs said. "It cannot be! it cannot be!"

"I have known of this for some little time past," Mrs. Clay remarked, "and I have no doubt that we are to have serious trouble here."

Mrs. Clay then rehearsed the conversation she had with the wife of Deacon Smith at the last donation party. She remarked, too, that her husband had lately heard what Colonel Presbury and Deacon Smith were endeavoring to do in relation to procuring a new horse for the pastor, and then said, —

"All this is being done to create dissatisfaction with Mr. Eldridge. Every one knows," she said, "that Mr. Eldridge dresses *neatly* and *appropriately*, and that Mr. Eldridge's horse is as good now as he ever was — that he looks as well as ever. There is no more reason for making a hue

and cry *now* about these things than there was *ten years ago;* and there would not be any thing said about them *but for the wicked feelings* and *cruel purpose* of Colonel Presbury and Deacon Smith. Colonel Presbury acquired a prejudice towards Mr. Eldridge because he had to pay a pretty round tax to settle the old parish debt; and this prejudice was increased by the tax he had to pay within a year or two for the repairs of our meeting house. Deacon Smith became displeased with our pastor because he was so faithful with his son Robert and tried to reclaim him and make him a blessing to his parents and the community. Mrs. Smith is almost distracted at the course the deacon is pursuing. She told me yesterday that it appeared to her that her heart would break if her husband did not desist. He has no reason for his conduct. Mr. Eldridge had done nothing but his duty, and she felt very grateful to him for his fidelity to her son."

"This seems but a dream," Mrs. Bangs observed. "*It cannot be a reality.*"

"It is distressing to think of," Mrs. Clay said; "but it is a reality. They are now at work to separate us from our beloved and faithful pastor. Colonel Presbury, Deacon Smith, Mr. Dixon, Mr. Otis, Miss Bemis, Mrs. Stimson, and a number of others are doing all that they can to alienate the people from Mr. Eldridge. They don't care a fig about Mr. Eldridge's horse or about Mrs. Eldridge's bonnet and shawl. They seize upon these for a pretext to *call round on the people* and to converse about the pastor — to misrepresent and defame him."

"They cannot succeed," Mrs. Bangs said, "surely they cannot succeed, in turning the hearts of this people from Mr. Eldridge."

"I thought so at first," Mrs. Clay remarked; "but now I am really fearful we shall have to part with our pastor. Deacon Smith has great influence, and so has Colonel Presbury."

"Well, *they will both lose their influence* when it comes to be known why they became dissatisfied with Mr. Eldridge," Mrs. Bangs remarked.

"They ought to lose it," Mrs. Clay said. "Men who will act from such motives as now govern the deacon and colonel ought not to have any influence in society, I think."

"Do you think," Mrs. Bangs asked, "that Mr. Eldridge knows any thing about these things?"

"I am afraid not," Mrs. Clay said. "Who would wish to communicate them to him? He ought to be apprised of the movement which is now being made. My husband has thought of informing him; but, then, he says he cannot summon the resolution necessary for so painful a duty. Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury are *very shy* in their movements, and I presume they do not intend to have the matter made public till all things are right for their object."

"It will not be possible to keep this movement from Mr. Eldridge," Mrs. Bangs said.

"What friend of our dear pastor would wish to divulge the matter to him? Would you?"

"O, I could not," Mrs. Bangs said.

"Neither could I," Mrs. Clay observed. "He must know it some time; but I presume he will not be informed of it till Colonel Presbury or Deacon Smith do it themselves."

"This is a most melancholy affair, truly," Mrs. Bangs said. "To have a minister who has been as devoted as Mr. Eldridge has been turned off merely because of his fidelity is really distressing; but I cannot believe he will leave."

"I hope he will not, surely," Mrs. Clay said, as she rose to leave; "but we must prepare ourselves for the worst."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LOAD OF WOOD.

The wife of an eminent clergyman in the western part of Massachusetts, an amiable and lovely woman, whose name we would give but for a promise of secrecy, once said to a friend younger than herself, who was likewise the companion of a minister, —

"You know some people think they may give almost any thing to a minister and it will pass for a present. I have frequently had things given to me which I would not, on any account, have given to the poorest person of my acquaintance for whom I had the least possible regard."

Any one at all conversant with pastoral life, doubtless, can attest to the truth of the above remark. Whilst it does not apply to the majority of parishioners, who, when they give any thing to a pastor, are very careful to have their present of value, yet it does with great propriety describe the manner in which a few often remember their minister. It is considered fashionable to give to a pastor, and it is well that it is so; for the salary of a clergyman is seldom larger than to meet the necessities of a family graduated on the most economical scale. By reason of such graduation there are some in every parish who think that the circumstances of their minister are such that almost any article of clothing or species of food would not at some time come amiss. In the gift of such, some

parishioners feel that they are really contributing to the comfort of their pastor's family; though what they give would, but for such destination, be cast out and trodden under foot.

In their purchases of their parishioners it not unfrequently occurs that ministers are subjected to the most fraudulent impositions. This is not true of all their purchases; for there be many in almost every parish who prefer when they sell to their pastor to bring forward the most excellent of their material, and even then to make a liberal abatement on the price. But there are others who take a different view of the situation of the minister and of their own favored opportunity to drive a good bargain when he happens to call to make a purchase. They can comprehend the delicacy of the pastor's feelings. They can understand the danger always attendant on a pastor's finding fault either with quality or measure. They often think, too, that the minister is not a judge and will not notice, and so, feeling that the staff is altogether in their own hands, they can do as they please, and that will be the last of it.

Mr. Eldridge had some such parishioners as the above last described. He and his wife doubtless remembered them long; for their gross and fraudulent impositions were often the subject of their conversation when they were where they were *sure* no one could overhear their exclamations over the wrongs which had been done them. One of these individuals we must bring out; for his overreaching propensities were so great as to induce Mr. Eldridge, under the advice and urgency of friends, to deviate from his established policy and demur to their righteousness and his duty to patient submission. This individual had never before the present year trafficked much in the neighborhood where Mr. Eldridge lived. The produce of his farm he had been accustomed to carry to a manufacturing

village at but a little greater distance from his house than was the residence of his pastor. He had not been much known as a trader, though he was considered a respectable man and a man of influence. Having cut off a large quantity of wood, and consequently wishing to dispose of the same, and the manufacturing village before alluded to being now a dull market in consequence of the embarrassments of trade, Mr. Conner sought a market for his wood in "*the centre*," and he succeeded in disposing of a large quantity. Mr. Eldridge had noticed his wood in different door yards, and, being pleased with its quality, thought it might be well for him to look to Mr. Conner for his supply. Accordingly he did so, and stipulated for the number of cords, quality, and the price, the same as others paid. Soon the wood began to appear; and as the first few cords were thrown off it appeared as well as any Mr. Conner had brought to the centre. Mr. Eldridge was well pleased with it and manifested his satisfaction. Soon, however, Mr. Eldridge noticed that the *quality* of the wood began to depreciate. More small sticks and crooked ones, too, began to appear; and, as the last cords were being thrown off, the difference was so perceptible as to excite from the youngest son of the pastor, a child of eight years, the inquiry of his father why he did not have all his wood alike. When Mr. Conner came with the last load, Squire Davidson and his son Charles were in the parsonage. It being a pleasant day, the squire thought it might be for his health and comfort to ride a little distance; and so he made it in his way to call on his pastor. After Mr. Conner had gone Mr. Eldridge and his friends walked out into the garden, and in returning to the house they came up by the wood.

"You have two kinds of wood, I see," Mr. Charles Davidson observed. "I suppose you consider it economical to buy some small wood, as it comes at half price."

"No," Mr. Eldridge replied, "I do not. All the wood I have had of Mr. Conner has been of one price."

"Well," said Mr. Davidson, "you do not mean to say that you give the full price for large and small wood?"

"Certainly I do," Mr. Eldridge replied.

"How much do you give for your wood?" the squire asked.

"I agreed to pay five dollars the cord."

"You do not expect to give five dollars for that cord Mr. Conner has just left, do you?" the squire asked.

"Of course I do," Mr. Eldridge replied; "though I do not think I ought to give it. My wife has been telling me now for a number of days, when Mr. Conner has been throwing of so much little and crooked wood, that I ought to speak to him about it and let him know that I notice it; but I have not, neither do I think I shall. It would probably displease Mr. Conner."

"Well," said both the squire and his son, "you ought not to pay full price for this wood. Not more than half, if there be half, is merchantable wood; and you owe it to yourself and family to see to it that you do not pay for the trashy stuff the same that you would have to pay for first-rate wood. Five dollars a cord is the top price; and wood ought to be first rate to bring this sum."

Mrs. Eldridge overheard this remark at her window where she was sitting, and soon she came out into the yard; and let it be known that she was aware of the subject upon which the gentlemen were conversing, and that she was happy to find that the squire and his son so well agreed with her in opinion as to Mr. Eldridge's duty.

"Should I now say to Mr. Conner," Mr. Eldridge observed, "that I thought he ought not to exact of me full price for this wood, I have no doubt he would feel himself injured. *It will not do for a minister to find fault with his people.*"

Both the squire and his son urged Mr. Eldridge, when Mr. Conner called for his pay, as he would the next day, to object to paying five dollars per cord for all that wood. They said so much, and were fortified so entirely by the eloquence of the good wife in the matter, that the pastor finally passed his word that he would deviate from the course he had practised hitherto, and stand out.

The next day, as was expected, Mr. Conner called and presented his bill for twelve cords of wood, at five dollars the cord. Mr. Eldridge took the paper and held it some time before he made any remark. At length he said, —

"I have supposed, Mr. Conner, that five dollars for all this lot of wood was more than a fair price."

"You agreed to give five dollars a cord; and I suppose there is nothing more to be said upon the subject," Mr. Conner replied.

"Yes, sir; I agreed to give that price, I acknowledge; but, then, I expected that you would bring me wood which is worth that price," Mr. Eldridge said.

"Well, Mr. Eldridge, you can pay me for the wood as you agreed or not, as you please," Mr. Conner said, taking up his hat and preparing to go out.

"I do not think it to be my duty to pay five dollars per cord for the entire lot," Mr. Eldridge said. "The first four or five cords you left was very good wood; but the last loads, seven or eight of them, have been a very different article. I think you must have noticed a difference yourself, Mr. Conner."

"I understand you to say, sir, that you will not pay me for the wood what you agreed to pay," Mr. Conner said.

"Yes, sir, I think I shall not pay you to-day sixty dollars for that lot of wood."

Upon this declaration Mr. Conner took his hat and very abruptly went from the house of Mr. Eldridge under the influence of the highest excitement.

Mrs. Eldridge, hearing the outer door violently close, hastened from her apartment to ascertain the cause. As she reached the door and opened it she saw Mr. Conner at a little distance from the house, walking with the greatest swiftness. She then entered the room where her husband was sitting and remarked at once, —

"Mr. Conner has gone, then; and I should think, from the way he walks, he is in great haste."

"He moved out here just now, with some velocity, I thought, and shut the outer door with some force too," Mr. Eldridge observed. "Mr. Conner is very much excited; and I am sorry almost that I manifested any dissatisfaction with the wood. He is very much displeased, and doubtless will be an enemy to me."

"I think, my dear, it would have been decidedly wrong in you to have paid that man as much for the wood he left here as you would have to pay for good wood. I don't think you know how miserable some of it is. I have been trying this morning to make a fire, and the wood is so soggy that I have had much difficulty. I should think it must have lain in Mr. Conner's swamp these five years. I don't believe half of this lot of wood has been cut within a year, as you said Mr. Conner told you it had been."

"I should not be at all surprised," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "if he had picked up the last loads he brought here in different places on his farm. I noticed that much of it looked like old wood that had been cut some time."

"Well, I hope, husband, you never will pay him any more than the wood is worth. I think you have been imposed upon as much as you ought to have been; and undoubtedly every one knows that you take any thing people have a mind to bring you, and pay just what they ask, without saying a word. I presume Mr. Conner thought you would not notice that the wood was not what it should have been, and that he could get a good round price out of you for

wood that he could hardly sell any where else. I think you ought before this to have let people know that you were not to be imposed upon. It would have been money in your pocket, besides being the means of giving us often much better articles than we have had. You remember the apples Mr. Otis sold you last year for first-rate Rhode Island greenings, don't you, and how nicely they were barrelled up for you, and how Mr. Otis told you they would not need picking over till midwinter? You know that we did not touch them till the first of January: and then, as we had some company that day, we thought we would get our *best apples;* and you remember how they looked — little things, no more like greenings than they were like oranges, and at the bottom of the barrel there was not a sound apple to be seen."

"O, yes, wife," Mr. Eldridge said, laughing most heartily at the remembrance and the earnestness of his wife in the matter; "O, yes.; I *remember* the apples."

"Well, now, Mr. Otis knew that he could get three dollars a barrel out of you for those apples as well as not. He knew they were nothing but cider apples when he brought them here. I wish I had had them opened at the time he left them, and had let him know that I could tell a Rhode Island greening from a snarly cider apple."

"O, well, wife, we had better submit to all these things quietly than make a fuss and displease our parishioners."

"I think ministers ought not to bear all things," Mrs. Eldridge said. "If they would now and then let it be known that they understood the nature of trading, and could tell a turkey from a goose, I think they would not be so often imposed upon."

* * * * * *

In the afternoon Mr. Eldridge and wife visited at Squire Davidson's. The squire, on the day preceding, informed them that he expected two or three clergymen, with their

wives, and some other company from out of town, and it would add much to the pleasure of the party, he had no doubt, if his pastor and lady should be with them. When Mr. and Mrs. Eldridge arrived it was somewhat late in the afternoon, as they were detained by the unexpected call of some friends from abroad. On entering the parlor, they were somewhat astonished to notice a larger number of visitors than they had anticipated ; but, as most of the party were old friends, it was a matter of very great pleasure to them to meet so many.

Whilst Mr. Eldridge was conversing with Mr. Charles Davidson in the evening, the latter gentleman alluded to the wood about which so much was said when he was at Mr. Eldridge's with his father on the preceding day.

"Have you seen Mr. Conner yet?"

"O, yes ; he called at our house this morning and presented me with his bill for twelve cords of wood, at five dollars per cord."

"Well, you did not pay it, I hope," Mr. Davidson said.

"No, sir ; I have not paid it ; but I rather think I shall. I think it would be better for me to do it than to have any difficulty about it."

"I would not on any account pay that price for all that wood. Father and I have talked about it considerably since we were at your house yesterday, and he thinks it would be wrong in you to do so. Mr. Conner could not recover half price for two thirds of the entire lot. Do you think he could, father?"

The old gentleman, though sitting near, and was supposed by the son to know the subject of their conversation, but did not, responded, —

"What was your question, Charles?"

"I thought you were aware that Mr. Eldridge and I have been conversing about Mr. Conner's wood, and I

asked you your opinion ; but it seems you have not been listening to our conversation."

"No, no," the squire observed, drawing his chair up to Mr. Eldridge ; "no, I have not heard a word."

"Mr. Conner has presented his bill," the son remarked, and Mr. Eldridge declines paying five dollars a cord for the whole lot."

"He does right," the squire said ; "yes, Mr. Eldridge, you have done right. Mr. Conner ought not to take advantage of his minister as he has done."

The squire, giving utterance to this remark with much energy, was heard by the whole company, and there seemed to be a general desire to be acquainted with the history of this matter. As the clergy was somewhat largely represented in the company, it was perfectly natural for such a desire to be excited by any thing connected with improper treatment of a minister. Mr. Davidson at once gave a history of the whole transaction about the wood, and closed by saying,—

"I think ministers ought to stand up for their rights, and then they would not be imposed upon as they now often are."

"I agree with you in that remark," Mr. Sandford observed. "I think self-respect, if nothing else, requires our profession to let it be known sometimes that *we are not all fools* in the matter of trade, and that we know when we are honorably and honestly dealt by and when we are defrauded. I have suffered somewhat after the manner of brother Eldridge, though on a smaller scale. Last winter the runners of my sleigh gave out, and, as I did not feel able to buy new ones, I thought I would make a little effort to get a set that had been used some. To my inquiries after such, I was at length directed to a certain individual in my parish who was known to have such articles. I called

upon this man, a member of my church, for whom I had much regard, and who always professed to be a great friend to me. He told me that he had lately sold a set of runners; 'but,' said he, 'I have a sleigh which I will sell you for the same price that I should ask for the runners alone.' Well, I went with him to look at it, and ascertained his price. 'Now,' he said, 'you have here a good top, which I give you, and the runners I only ask six dollars for.' Well, I thought the top was better than mine, and so I concluded to purchase; and I paid him six dollars and took the sleigh home. I had not driven a quarter of a mile from the man's house before I was met by one of my people, who informed me that he had been offered, the day before, the same sleigh by the same individual of whom I purchased it *for four dollars;* but he did not think it worth even that."

After a hearty laugh all round, Mr. Patterson remarked that he had some experience of the same kind of good feeling, which he would rehearse for the amusement of the company.

"When I left the place where I was first settled I sold off many of my things, and there remained only one article to be disposed of; and this was in my barn cellar. My deacon lived the next house to mine, and I asked him if he did not wish to purchase. He said he did; and so he came over and looked at the heap and asked me my price. I told him I was no judge, and that I would leave the worth of it to him. He told me he thought there were two cords of it, and he would give me ten dollars. 'Well,' said I, 'deacon, if you think that is all it is worth, you may have it.' He said he would be up the next day and pay me for it. He had not been gone from the barn two hours before another individual called who resided four miles from my house. As he and I were walking about the premises, looking about, he cast his eye under the

barn and discovered the manure heap, and immediately asked what I was intending to do with it. I asked him to look at it and tell me what he judged it to be worth. He accordingly did, and said there were nearly three cords, and that he would give me fifteen dollars for it. 'Well,' said I, 'I have sold it to the deacon yonder for ten dollars; but I presume he will not hold me to the bargain if I tell him what you say.' 'Well,' he said, 'I will give you fifteen dollars for it if the deacon don't take it.' I immediately went to the deacon's, told him the offer I had just received, and asked him to release me from the sale. But he would not do it, and did not do it, though he was a forehanded man, and knew that I needed every dollar I could possibly command."

After Mr. Patterson had finished this recital there was a pretty general pouring forth of animadversion upon such ungenerous and unchristian treatment of ministers. The opinion seemed to prevail among the company that the man who would treat a clergyman thus might be guilty of far worse deeds. When remark on this subject seemed to be exhausted, Mr. Davidson observed, "Perhaps some of the other clergymen present can give us their experience on the matter."

"Don't, Charles, don't call for more such facts. I am mortified now very much by what has already been said of the disposition of people to take advantage of ministers, and I do not want to hear any thing more."

"What is said does not alter matters in the least, father," Charles replied. "For my part, I want to see the 'whole critter,' as the man said. I should really like to hear the other ministers' account of their experience, if they have any to give."

"O, well, if they are disposed to gratify you, I will not make any objection," the squire remarked.

Mr. Bullard, a lawyer, was present; and, from the

manner in which he appeared, it was evident that he had something to say touching the subject; and, to help his friend Mr. Davidson draw out from the other ministers present what was in their power to communicate, he said, "After the clergymen have done, I have a fact or two to relate on the same subject." So Mr. Fletcher, being directly asked if he had not something to offer, proceeded to say that he had hitherto escaped being the victim of such undue advantage as had been taken of the others who had preceded him. "But what has been said here this evening reminds me of the case of brother Anderson, who preached for a few years near me in the next town. I have heard him and his wife tell the story with considerable feeling; and no wonder. They did not keep house, but boarded; and they were somewhat troubled to get suitable accommodations, and so they changed pretty often. Brother Anderson became tired of this changing quarters so frequently that he came to the determination that if he could not have a *steady* boarding-place he would leave the place. When his year was up he told the committee of the parish that he must be provided with a boarding place *for a year*, if he made another engagement to preach. At last a place was found. The family were pleased with the opportunity of having the minister and his wife of their number. The terms were arranged, and Mr. and Mrs. Anderson went to their new home. By the contract, *they were to remain for one year* from April, and Mr. Anderson was to have the gratuitous use of the horse and carriage when either were not wanted by the other members of the family. *Three months did not pass* before the man with whom Mr. Anderson boarded *sold his horse;* and then, when he exchanged or wished to visit remote parts of the town, he was obliged to hire; and when cold weather came, and the evenings were of some length, it became *inconvenient* for the family longer to accom-

modate the minister. '*They had us*,' *Mr. Anderson said*, '*when there was no expense for fuel and lights;* but when these were necessary it became inconvenient to accommodate us; and so I had to look up another boarding house and to pay a higher price.' Mr. Anderson said he had no doubt the family *designed* to get a good price for *summer board* by agreeing to accommodate them for the year, and he regretted that he had been the means of having his landlord *sell his horse*."

"That was a pity," Mrs. Patterson remarked.

All eyes were now directed to the lawyer; but he said his time had not come yet; there were one or two more clergymen to speak. "Come Mr. Murray, you have something to communicate," he said.

"Nothing," Mr. Murray said, "from my own experience; but as Mr. Bullard seems determined not to give his story till all have spoken, I will say something to draw him out." So he remarked, "I exchanged, a few Sabbaths ago, with a brother who is preaching about twenty-five miles from me. Mr. Lesly, when he proposed the exchange, remarked that it was a long distance, but that many of his people wished very much to hear me preach, and so he would like to gratify them. I started away from home Saturday afternoon about two o'clock; and about four I met brother Lesly on foot. I was astonished to see him thus, for he was a feeble man, and I expressed to him my feelings. He said he did not intend to walk; that he thought there was no doubt that some of the many people who had frequently requested him to exchange with me would gladly furnish him with a horse for his accommodation if he should do so. 'But,' said he, 'I tried yesterday in ten places, and this morning in four others, but could not succeed in getting a horse; and so, about nine o'clock, set out on foot. I rested three hours in the middle of the day, and so I am rather late. I am very much fatigued, I

assure you. Had I known that I should have been obliged to walk, I should not have proposed the exchange.'"

"That was a cruel thing," said two or three voices at once."

"If I had been in your place," the squire remarked, "I should have preached pretty plainly to that man's people."

"It was an abominable thing," Mr. Fletcher observed, "for that people not to let Mr. Lesly have a horse, when he made the exchange merely to gratify them."

So one and another expressed themselves, till all had said something, when one remarked, —

"Now, Mr. Bullard, we must hear you."

"*I am ready now*," Mr. Bullard remarked; and at once proceeded to say, "Most of you probably know that our minister and I married our wives from the same town, and that they were and are very intimate friends. Last spring Mr. Davis was in my office, and in the course of his call asked me if I knew who had any good potatoes to sell. I told him I did not, unless Mr. Barnet, the storekeeper, had them. I told him I believed *we* were nearly out, and proposed going immediately over to the store and see if we could not each of us obtain a supply. On our way I was overtaken by a gentleman who wished to consult me; and so I left Mr. Davis and went back to my office. He went on and called at the store and found some potatoes. He engaged a barrel. When I went home to tea, I likewise called at the store and asked Mr. Barnet if he had any good potatoes. He told me he had some of the first quality. So I agreed to take a barrel. Mr. Barnet agreed to send them along when he sent Mr. Davis's, the next morning. We were not quite out; so the barrel was not immediately opened. The next week I was absent at court, and my wife one day thought she would go over and make Mrs. Davis a visit. She did so, and was persuaded to stay to dinner. At the table

she observed that there were some very excellent potatoes, and, being superior to any she had seen for some time, she was induced to ask Mr. Davis where he obtained them. He told her. She remarked her husband bought a barrel there lately, but they had not yet used any; but, she said, if they are like these, she would have the barrel opened at once. A day or two after I returned she requested me to open that barrel of potatoes, at the same time telling me of the very excellent ones she had seen on the table at Mr. Davis's. I accordingly went down cellar and opened the barrel, when, instead of there being large potatoes, I found them very small. I called my wife to come and look at them and compare them with Mr. Davis's. She came, and exclaimed at once, 'How very small they are! They don't look like those I saw at Mrs. Davis's.' 'No,' I said; 'nor do they look like the barrel Mr. Barnet showed me.' I headed them up, and when I went to my office called at the store and told Mr. Barnet that I wished he would send and get those potatoes he sent to me the other day. 'What is the matter?' Mr. Barnet asked. 'O,' I said, 'I don't want them; they are not what I bought.' Mr. Barnet at once called his Irishman, Michael, and asked him if he made any mistake in the potatoes he delivered at Mr. Bullard's; if he did not deliver the barrel he crossed as the one for Mr. Bullard. 'No,' said Michael; 'I carried that to Mr. Davis.' 'What did you do that for?' with much excitement Mr. Barnet inquired. 'Und I thut that I wud,' said Michael. 'You thought you would! Don't you know that you are to obey my orders?' 'Fath,' said Michael, 'I thut I wud like to see whut the lawyar wud do if he was sarved as ye sarve the praest. I've curried poor butther and shanded sugar very often to the praest; and I made up me mind I would like to know what the lawyar wud say to be trated so; and I curried the poor potatoes to thry him. The best barrel

I carried to the praest.' 'Shut up, you blockhead!' Mr. Barnet vociferated as Michael was explaining and as I was laughing as if my sides would come off. 'Shut up, you blockhead, and pack up your things and be off!' As soon as I could recover myself I said to Mr. Barnet that I would keep the potatoes and would most cheerfully pay for them, and should feel a great pleasure in doing so, inasmuch as my friend the parson had been fortunate enough to have the good barrel intended for me."

It is perhaps superfluous to add that this recital of the lawyer's occasioned such volumes of laughter as were uncommon in the quiet house of the squire. It seemed for a while that the violent shaking of sides and bending of backs might result in some serious injury to the whole company. The squire was so affected that he could not utter a word for many minutes; and, indeed, the power of speech seemed to be pretty generally suspended in all who were present. At length Charles commanded himself sufficiently to remark, —

"That was capital, I declare."

"How well the storekeeper was punished!" added the squire. "I think the matter ought to be published."

After one and another had expressed themselves in relation to the lawyer's story, Mr. Bullard added, —

"This affair was a good thing for Mr. Davis, and for Mr. Barnet, the storekeeper, likewise. Mr. Barnet was most effectually mortified. He took me one side after the excitement of the moment and earnestly entreated me to keep dark, and promised that Mr. Davis should be a special customer hereafter in another way. He kept his promise, I believe; for I have often heard Mrs. Davis say since that Mr. Barnet's goods were much *better* than formerly, and that he had been of late very *generous* to them."

When the company were preparing to leave, the ladies

being up stairs putting on their bonnets, &c., Mr. Davidson stepped up to Mr. Eldridge and remarked, —

"I really hope you will never pay Mr. Conner full price for that wood. The more I think of it, the more I am convinced it would be wrong in you to submit to such imposition."

"Would you have me stand out, if by the act I should make Mr. Conner my enemy?" Mr. Eldridge asked.

"I would not pay him the full price," said Mr. Davidson, "let the consequence be what it might."

"Mr. Conner was much excited when he left our house, I assure you," Mr. Eldridge said.

"I presume he was giving Mr. Otis an account of the matter," Mr. Davidson said; "for I saw him yesterday talking with the gentleman about twelve o'clock, and he manifested considerable emotion, I thought, by the gestures he made."

"I have no doubt he has told almost every one he has met since," Mr. Eldridge said. "I am almost sorry that I did not pay him all that he demanded."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE PASTOR'S INTERVIEW WITH THE DEACON.

About six weeks from the period at which we left Mr. Eldridge in the last chapter he was waited upon by Deacon Smith. Whether he had been informed that Mrs. Eldridge was out of town for a day or two, and that the pastor was almost alone with his children, and was induced to take such a time for an interview, we know not; but it was a noticeable circumstance by Mr. Eldridge that the visit should have thus occurred. Though the pastor had recently been apprised that the deacon had taken some exceptions to his course with the wayward son, and that he was consorting with Colonel Presbury in attempts at retaliation, yet, from what he thought he knew of the feelings of the multitude, he had no special apprehension that success would attend any efforts for disorganization or disrupture. Therefore he was in no way disconcerted when he found himself alone with the deacon. The thought, however, did not occur to Mr. Eldridge that the object of this visit was what it proved to be; and so, as had always been his manner, he treated the deacon just as if all was smooth water on which his bark was resting. The deacon for a while responded to this feeling, and was apparently in the same friendly humor which had for nearly twenty years characterized him whenever

he met his pastor. At length, however, the new feelings were manifested as the deacon remarked, —

"I have been wishing, Mr. Eldridge, for some little time to converse with you upon the state of matters in our parish; and, having a little leisure this evening, I thought I would ride up and see you."

"I am pleased," Mr. Eldridge replied, "to converse upon such a subject; for my thoughts are most usually directed to the concerns of the people. Is there any thing particularly new touching the interests of the church or parish?"

"I have thought," said the deacon, "that our pastor might not be aware of the state of things among us; and, though it may not be a very pleasant subject for him to consider, yet others besides myself have judged that he ought to be informed in relation to it."

"Please to proceed," Mr. Eldridge said.

"Well, sir, to come directly to the point, there is not a little dissatisfaction with our minister. Some of the people have been dissatisfied for years, but have disguised their feelings, not being willing to create any disturbance."

"I have within a few days been informed," Mr. Eldridge said, "that there were a few individuals in the parish whose feelings towards me were somewhat changed; but I have supposed that there was nothing very serious in the matter."

"I do not exactly know," the deacon said, "how many are opposed; but I should think the number is not very small."

"I have not heard that any others were opposed to me but Colonel Presbury, and yourself, and two or three more," Mr. Eldridge said. "Colonel Presbury became dissatisfied, I am informed, because he thought I had been too active in matters which did not properly concern me;

and Deacon Smith's opposition was excited by my fidelity to his family in endeavoring to make an erring son see the error of his ways and become a blessing to his dear parents and the community."

"Well, sir, do you think that you pursued the proper course with our Robert?"

"I am not aware that I pursued an improper course," was the reply. "I ever have been deeply interested in your family; and it was a source of the deepest pain to know that Robert was in the way he was. You know, deacon, how I felt; and you probably remember how you felt at the time I called at your house when the subject was first introduced. You are aware that *you* and Mrs. Smith *entreated me, with tears in your eyes*, to exert myself to reclaim your son. I did endeavor to do this; and had Robert been my own child I could not have pursued a more kind, and affectionate, and earnest course to snatch him from destruction than I did."

"Yes, sir," said the deacon, brushing away his tears, "I know you felt for us then; but I think you went too far. You did not seem to think that Robert altered any for the better after your first and second interviews with him. *I thought* there was a great improvement in him; and, if you had let him alone then, I think he would have been an altered person."

"I did think, for a week or two after my second conversation with Robert, that he would do better, I acknowledge," Mr. Eldridge said; "and I kept my eye upon him, that I might have evidence of his reformation both for my comfort and your own; but I soon discovered that, instead of improving, he was going from bad to worse. Therefore I did *not let him alone*, as you intimate I ought to have done. I sought for other opportunities to save him, because I felt for you and his dear mother so tenderly, and because I felt for the youth likewise."

"I *was not aware* that he continued to go on in the evil way after your second interview with him," the deacon said. "I thought, from what Robert told me, *that he meant to do differently*, and I thought I saw good reason for believing that he began to amend."

"Well, deacon, had *you* seen all that *I saw*, and heard all that I heard, you would not have been thus blinded. I think Robert endeavored to *deceive* both you and me; and *had I not been very much interested* in his welfare and in the happiness of his parents, and kept a good lookout for him, I have no doubt he would have succeeded in deceiving me as I fear he has you."

"Well, what you said to him made him excessively angry, and he has acted worse ever since; and *he thinks you abused him; and I cannot avoid thinking as he does*," the deacon observed.

"You are both very much mistaken," said the pastor. "Had you been present when I last conversed with your son, as I very much wish you had been, you would not have thought that I treated him otherwise than in a very kind and affectionate manner. I endeavored faithfully to point out to him the consequences of his present career, and to awaken within him a resolution to reform, both for his own sake and for the happiness of his parents and the benefit of the community."

"I cannot avoid feeling," the deacon said, "that you abused Robert, and that you have been the means of making him what he now is. I think you have done both him and me a lasting injury."

"I am very much surprised that you can think so," Mr. Eldridge said, "after what I have now stated to you. I am certain you have no cause for such a feeling as you express."

"I think I have," the deacon said. "Robert *would not be so angry* with you if you had not abused him, I know. *He will bear reproof* when it is kindly given."

"It appears to me very strange, deacon, that you have never mentioned to me before how you felt. I have seen you once or twice at least, since my last conversation with Robert, and have met Mrs. Smith likewise. I should have supposed you would have sought from me some explanation of my conduct before this. It is now nearly three months since I conversed with your son."

"Well, I *did not care about seeing you*, I felt so about your abusing Robert," said the deacon.

"I am perfectly astonished," Mr. Eldridge said, "at your feeling, deacon. You may rest assured you have no good cause to feel as you do. Does your wife sympathize with you? I cannot think she does, for she never treated me with more cordiality than she has of late."

"My wife is not here," the deacon said. "If she was, she could answer for herself."

* * * * * *

"There are quite a number of your people who feel that they can no longer be benefited by your ministry," the deacon remarked; "and I thought I would call up and tell you of it."

"Who besides yourself and Colonel Presbury?"

"There are Mr. Dixon, Mr. Otis, and several families who live near Colonel Presbury; and *there are Mr. Conner*, a large number who live in his neighborhood, and — O, I cannot now think of half of them," the deacon *thoughtfully* said. "Your refusing to pay Mr. Conner for the wood as you agreed to has made you a great many enemies. I was surprised when I heard of it; for Mr. Conner is a man who is much respected in town, and *has considerable influence*."

"What have you heard about the wood?" the pastor inquired.

"O, nothing, only that you engaged twelve cords of wood of Mr. Conner at five dollars per cord; and that,

after the wood was all delivered, you refused to pay him."

"You did not hear what kind of wood he delivered me, did you?"

"No, sir."

"Well, deacon, I will get my lantern, and I should like to have you look at it. Some of it is sawed up and piled in my wood house, and some is where Mr. Conner threw it off."

"I *don't care about seeing the wood*," the deacon said.

"Well, deacon, I have no doubt, from what good judges of wood have told me, that Mr. Conner could not have sold that lot of wood for more than three dollars a cord, if he could for that sum. I was astonished, when he threw off the last seven or eight cords, that he should bring me such wood and expect full price for it; but I thought I would not say any thing about it, and I never should have done as I have had I not been urged very much by some of the very best judges in this place to decline paying full price for the wood. A number of people told me I ought not to pay more than thirty dollars for the lot; but I have offered Mr. Conner forty-five dollars, and he has refused to take the money. Have you ever heard that I made him this offer?"

"Not that I remember," the deacon replied.

"I think you ought to have heard of this as well as the other part of the story," Mr. Eldridge said. "What reasons are urged by others for their being unable to be benefited by my ministry?" the pastor inquired.

"O, I do not know as any particular reasons are mentioned, only *that they think they should like another minister*."

"Do you think, deacon, that such a feeling as you represent is such as ought to be noticed by a pastor?"

"If I were a minister," the deacon replied, "I should not want to preach where a considerable portion of my hearers disliked me."

"I understand you to say, deacon, that you are dissatisfied with me so much as to desire my removal."

"That is my feeling," the deacon said.

"Do Colonel Presbury and Mr. Dixon feel as you do?"

"Yes, sir, and many others. A large number of the *female part* of the congregation are very anxious for a new minister."

"Well, deacon, I will think of this subject," the pastor said.

"I should think it best," the deacon said, "both for yourself and the parish, that you act in relation to the matter very soon. From what I know, I am confident that those who are now dissatisfied with you will never feel reconciled to your further ministry as their pastor. *They will agitate* and *agitate until they gain their object.* Now, I say this for *your good,* Mr. Eldridge; and I think you have seen enough of the manner in which ministers about you have been dismissed to be *wise* enough to leave *without there being made a desperate* effort to effect your dismission."

"I am obliged to you for your *good feeling,* deacon. You know that *I have experienced largely of your kindness for the last twenty years!*"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

REQUEST FOR A DISMISSION.

THE conviction cannot have escaped the reader that Rev. Mr. Eldridge cherished high and noble views of the profession to which he was devoted, and that he considered a *permanent* ministry had all the advantage over one that is *transient* and *changing*. Nor can the reader fail to have noticed that he, at the outset of his pastoral connection, laid his plans broad, so that he might be unto the people of his charge a minister who should do them all the good it were in his power to accomplish. Nor is it possible for the impression not to have been made that in each successive year of his pastorate he had only one purpose of life; and that was, to spend and be spent wholly in the service of that charge which he received when a young man. There were many temptations laid in his path to swerve from so high and noble a purpose. Offers of situations in many respects far more congenial to his taste, and where the emoluments would greatly transcend the salary on which he was settled, were often made to him; but from all these he at once turned, feeling that, should he intermit preaching in the place where he took upon him ordination vows, the usefulness of his ministry and life would be very much *abridged*. He had no sympathy with that pride and ambition which often under another name, with more of the air of godliness about it, but with little of

its power, induces pastors to change from a limited to a larger field of pastoral labor because the opportunity for usefulness would be augmented. He contemplated the chasm left by the pastor who yields to such a "louder call," as it is termed, and saw that, however useful he might be in his new sphere, he could never repair the injury which was on every side round his late charge, and calling almost for vengeance upon the guilty cause. All the *evils* which came in consequence of the pastor's leaving the people of his first love he would *subtract* from the *good* he might effect in his *second* pastorate, and the balance of usefulness would be so small as to excite the feeling that on the whole it would have been good for that man if he had never entered the ministry. By reason of these convictions, Mr. Eldridge was *determined* that his ministry should not be thus shorn of its usefulness, and that he would not be the man over whom any part of his present flock should weep and sigh because he left them when there was no cause but that of pride and ambition. It may be he carried his views to too extreme a point, and it may be he did not. The evils flowing out of a fluctuating ministry are so great, that, perhaps, if all pastors sympathized more with this feeling of Mr. Eldridge, more good might be accomplished by their ministry. Few, very few, are the occasions which will justify a pastor in sundering the solemn ties which were in so much confidence and solemnity established at ordination. They who have watched behind where these ties have been torn asunder, and have heard the curses of the ungodly and the wailings of the saints, and witnessed evil upon evil coming down on the desolated fold by reason of the breach of so solemn a trust and pledge, feel that the good to be effected in the new field, let it be ever so great, can never compensate for the evils which have been occasioned in consequence of the yielding to the "*loud call.*"

Having continued thus long in the ministry with a high estimate of the value of permanency in the pastoral relation; having from time to time more than intimated to the people of his charge that he should heed no overtures made to him to occupy another field; having not only at home frowned upon the tendency in both pastors and people to change, but abroad, when called to sit in councils for the dismission of ministers, having raised high his voice against this most deleterious practice, — Mr. Eldridge could not be supposed to allow such a visit as the deacon made him to move him to any rash action. From the hour the deacon left him he meditated much, and that prayerfully, upon the disclosures that were made to him that he might learn his duty in reference to them. For this purpose he consulted one or two of his parishioners in whom he always had confided and who were thought by him to be competent advisers in the matter. Squire Davidson, Mr. Clay, and Dr. Howard were these individuals. To the squire, who had been secluded by the infirmities of age from any considerable intercourse with the people, the intelligence brought to him by his pastor of the deacon's position was entirely new. Though his daughter Frances (Mrs. Howard) had an inkling of the matter, she felt it to be her duty to manifest nothing; for she was fearful that it would be too much for her venerable father to bear. When, therefore, Mr. Eldridge broke to this standard bearer in the church the state of affairs in the parish as disclosed by Deacon Smith, it seemed for a while that he would sink under the disclosure. He knew the fidelity of the pastor. He knew how well both church and parish had prospered under his ministry. He had indulged most joyous feelings in anticipation of leaving the parish united and happy under the present pastor. He, too, recalled to his memory a great many pulpits in the adjacent community which had changed incumbents

once, twice, and some thrice, since the settlement of Mr. Eldridge; and in view of this fact he remembered how many times he had pointed people abroad to his own parish, would they learn the rich benefits of a permanent pastorship. Likewise the squire remembered well *Deacon Smith's position* in relation to Mr. Eldridge for twenty years; and then the thought that he was now heading a faction for the purpose of rending all these his cherished sources of pleasure, and bringing sorrow to his pastor, ruin, perhaps, to the church and certainly reproach to the cause of piety, well nigh prostrated the old veteran in Israel to the dust.

"*It cannot be*," the squire remarked, "that any great number sympathize with the deacon. *I am sure it cannot be;* and my advice to you, Mr. Eldridge, is, to think so yourself, and to take no notice of the matter. It might be well, as you have suggested, to take some opportunity to confer with Dr. Howard; for, as he is abroad considerably in town, he would probably know the state of feeling as well as any one."

Mr. Eldridge soon had an interview with the doctor, which resulted in the conviction that, whatever might be the power of opposition to the pastor in the circle represented by Deacon Smith, it did not reach beyond that circle and pervade the majority of the people. Mr. Clay had the same view of the matter; and both he and the doctor thought that there was no cause for Mr. Eldridge's alarm, and advised him most earnestly to continue on in the even tenor of his way. The doctor remarked *that he did not believe the pastor ever had a stronger hold of the great body of the people than he had at the present time*, and that he did not think it *possible* for Deacon Smith or Colonel Presbury to prejudice the minds of any against him unless they had better materials to work with than they had produced. In accordance with this advice, which corresponded well with his own judgment, Mr. Eldridge neither in word nor

action manifested any knowledge of the doings of the deacon and his company; and it was agreed by the doctor and Mr. Clay that *they* would be perfectly *ignorant* of the same. They each wisely concluded that they would furnish no fuel for the fire by any action or word in relation to the matter. If Deacon Smith and those confederated with him pursued their evil work, they should have no encouragement either from the pastor or his friends.

So sanguine was the deacon, however, in the feeling that the hints he gave his pastor would be effectual, that he really expected to hear on the next Sabbath his request for a dismission. On his way to the house of God he remarked to his wife, that, from what he knew, he "should not be surprised if Mr. Eldridge should ask for a dismission to-day." He did this to *prepare* her for the event, knowing that she was not *anticipating* such a trial, and that if it came suddenly upon her she might be most severely overcome. Colonel Presbury, Mr. Dixon, Mr. Otis, Miss Bemis, and others all went to church expecting that the pastor would communicate to his people a desire to vacate his pastorate. However, they were all disappointed. Mr. Eldridge preached as usual, and indicated nothing from which it could be inferred that any unusual occurrence had transpired in the previous week to disturb him. He did the same on the succeeding Sabbath, and on the *one* following *that*, much to the chagrin and disappointment of those who were looking for a communication. The week after the third Sabbath, Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury *together* called at the parsonage. They had waited much beyond the period which their patience had allotted as the full time it would be necessary for the pastor to hold the subject under advisement without any report of his feelings respecting it, *and they could wait no longer* without making another effort to rouse Mr. Eldridge to action. Both these gentlemen, after

they were seated in the room with their pastor, appeared to forget the etiquette of civilized life, and manifested more of the feelings of the forest than of the gentleman and Christian. To the pastor's courteous inquiries after their own health and that of their families nothing but dogged replies were returned, and it became at once evident to Mr. Eldridge that they were now the victims of rage and anger.

"We have called," said the deacon, in the most abrupt manner, "to know if you are intending to ask for a dismission soon. We have been expecting for upwards of two weeks to hear such a request; and, as we have been disappointed, we would like to know if you intend to go away."

Mr. Eldridge remarked, "For a pastor to leave a people with whom he has been connected for twenty years there ought to be the best of reasons. Since you were here the other evening, deacon, I have thought much of the subject of your conversation, I assure you, and have been endeavoring to learn my duty in the case."

"Then you haven't *learned* it yet, I suppose," the deacon said. "Well, sir, we think that, if you knew how people felt, you would not wish to preach here another Sabbath."

"I have endeavored to be advised on this point," Mr. Eldridge observed, "and I have not yet been able to learn that there is any very serious trouble away from the circle represented by yourself and your friend the colonel. I am told that this circle must be small."

"It is large enough," Colonel Presbury remarked, "to make it very uncomfortable for a pastor to preach here who takes the part which Mr. Eldridge has taken."

"Yes," said the deacon, "there is no doubt that the opposition to you, Mr. Eldridge, is strong enough to effect your dismission. But *we do not wish to go forward in the matter!* We think it would be for *your* benefit *if you should*

leave of your own accord! It always injures a minister very much for the parish to act first!"

After this manner did the conversation continue for nearly an hour, and as the gentlemen were about leaving Deacon Smith remarked, —

"We hope you will now be induced to ask for a dismission next Sabbath."

This interview produced a very marked effect upon the pastor. The feelings manifested by the individuals who had called upon him were those which he never before witnessed in his parish, and they most deeply affected the sensitive nature of the pastor. For an hour or more after he was left alone Mr. Eldridge sat in the room pensive and sad. Expecting him every moment into her own apartment after she knew his visitors had gone, and wondering for some time why he did not come, Mrs. Eldridge at length left her needle and went to her husband. As she opened the door he raised not his head, which was reclining on his hand, nor uttered a word. When she reached the chair in which he was seated he moved not nor spoke. So unusual for him was this manner that the good wife was alarmed, and nervously asked, —

"Husband, what *is* the matter?"

"I never thought it would come to this!" he with a sigh exclaimed. "I never thought it would come to this!"

Instantly drawing a chair to his side, Mrs. Eldridge again asked, —

"Do, husband, *tell me* what it is that affects you so! What have Colonel Presbury and the deacon been saying?"

"Their feelings! *their feelings!*" he said. "I could not have conceived it *possible* for *Deacon Smith* to cherish the spirit he manifested here this evening. I cannot endure this any longer. I believe I shall ask for a dismission next Sabbath."

"Have they said any thing new, dear?"

"No, nothing; but, then, how can I be here and have even *these two men* feel towards me as they appear to feel?"

"You must not give up to your feelings so, husband; you must rise above it. You ought to think you have been a favored individual never before to have been treated in this manner, after having been here twenty years. *Some* pastors have to go through the same experience every year, you know. There's brother Perkins; every now and then, for a number of years past, some of his people have been to him and talked most abusively to him, and have told him he ought to go away; but he remains yet, and is very much beloved and respected by the great majority of his society. Come, dear, don't think any thing more about it; *throw it off.*"

The efforts of the wife were successful in rallying her husband to his wonted cheerfulness and equanimity; and he retired from his room relieved and comparatively happy, and went with his wife to the sitting room of the family. The next day he called upon Dr. Howard and acquainted him with the interview of the deacon and colonel. The doctor heard all, but was not in the least impressed that any thing had been offered that ought in the least to affect the action of the pastor; and he advised him to be still, and let the deacon and colonel *sweat*. "I am going round considerable to-day," he remarked, "and will call at your house this evening and report."

In the evening the doctor called and gave his pastor the history of his attempts in developing the state of feeling towards him. No individual could do better on such an errand than he. Without its being known to the individuals whose *pulse* he wished to feel that such was his object, he succeeded well in his object, and generally found *that all was right*, though in a few instances he discovered some vague surmises that Deacon Smith did not appear exactly as he formerly did in relation to prayer meetings, and that his bearing towards Mr. Eldridge had somewhat changed;

yet in the circuit in which the doctor travelled during the day he heard nothing to induce him to think that there was any abatement of affection and respect for the pastor. He purposely called at certain places where he would have been likely to hear the full avowal of hostility were there any to avow. He went up into Mr. Conner's neighborhood, and was surprised to find so many speak so highly of Mr. Eldridge. He heard but a few, and those few not the most gifted and intelligent, who had any thing to urge against the pastor by reason of his transactions about the wood. So, on the whole, he was for reaffirming to Mr. Eldridge the advice given after the first visit of the deacon — to take no notice whatever of the second call. He remarked "that both Squire Davidson and Mr. Clay, whom he had seen that day, agreed with him perfectly in opinion upon the matter."

In the course of a few days Mr. Eldridge thought he would call here and there in the parish, that he might discover any new light on his pathway if any existed. Wherever he went he was welcomed with the same confiding, affectionate feeling as ever. He heard many things that encouraged him greatly in his way ; and he returned home with the conviction that he should not on *the next Sabbath* propose to have his relations to his people sundered. In this position he continued through the week ; and on the Sabbath he preached as usual, and pronounced the benediction in the afternoon, without gratifying the few who were looking for a special communication from him to the church and parish. The next morning, as he opened the front door of his house, he noticed a letter on the step below to his address. As he opened it and looked for the name of its writer, he discovered that it was anonymous. He then proceeded to its perusal, and found it filled with the most severe sayings, couched in the coarsest of our vernacular. He folded it up, and returned with it to his study, where he deposited it in a secure place. In the course of the

week he received several others — some through the post office, and some at his own door or in his yard. They all bore one character and had the same design. Of all these he made no mention to any one, not even to his wife. By them he was not much affected; for he thought they all emanated from the same source, and were intended as a substitute for a *third visit*. The next Sabbath he exchanged, but he did not leave any communication to be read to his people. At the close of the afternoon service, when the people were dispersing for their homes, Deacon Smith was observed to be moving rapidly about as if in search for some individual. Dr. Howard, noticing the fact, thought he would not be much in haste, and accordingly loitered about at his leisure. He soon found the deacon was in the rear of the church, surrounded by several individuals whom he recognized as belonging to the faction of which he was the life. Having ascertained all that he wanted, the doctor moved along towards his home.

In the early part of the week the doctor met the deacon, when the latter asked him if he was aware what a *dreadful* state the parish was in. The doctor replied that he was not.

"Have you not heard any thing from Mr. Eldridge about it," the deacon eagerly asked.

"Mr. Eldridge has said something to me respecting one or two calls which you have made him recently," the doctor said.

"He told you what I said to him then, I suppose?" the doctor continued.

"I presume he did," was the reply.

"Well, doctor, if the man don't take himself off, I fear there will be serious trouble here."

"I do not agree with you," the doctor responded.

"Well," said the deacon, "you will see before long, if Mr. Eldridge does not very soon ask for a dismission.

"I do not see any call for this," the doctor remarked.

"I hear of no opposition to Mr. Eldridge but that which comes from you, and Colonel Presbury, and a few others over whom you have influence. I tell Mr. Eldridge to be still and go on as usual."

"Yes, yes," the deacon said. "Well, doctor, you don't hear much said in the parish, I know. All who are opposed to Mr. Eldridge have determined that we would not act out at present. We want that he should *quietly* leave. If he believes me, he might know that there is great opposition to him. Now, doctor, I tell you what — *just let Mr. Eldridge ask for a dismission*, and then, if there be not a fair vote to grant it, I will guaranty that all will be satisfied who are now opposed to him. I think it would be greatly to his advantage to ask for a dismission. If he does not he will have a hard time of it here, I am persuaded."

Mr. Clay had a conversation with Colonel Presbury about the time of the interview between the doctor and the deacon; and in the course of the week Colonel Presbury met Mr. Eldridge in the street and conversed with him for a long time; and the result was — of all this conversation with Mr. Clay, the doctor, and Mr. Eldridge — that it was mutually thought advisable, all things considered, for the request for a dismission to be made by the pastor on the next Sabbath. Both the doctor and Mr. Clay were *strong* in the opinion that it would not be granted, and Mr. Eldridge had become so much annoyed by the opposition as to desire most strongly to have the feelings of the people tested.

The next Sabbath was a memorable day in the parish of Mr. Eldridge. Outwardly it was a day of sunshine and pleasantness; and, by reason of the propitious weather, there was a large assembly in the house of God. The pastor never was more solemn and eloquent in his services, and the people apparently were never more impressed. Before pronouncing the benediction in the afternoon, Mr. Eldridge remarked that he had a communication to

present, and requested the assembly to be seated. He then proceeded to read his request for a dismission. The document was brief and to the point. He remarked that it had ever been his purpose to remain among his present charge until removed by death or prevented from being useful by any dissatisfaction towards him among his people. Statements recently had been made to him, and feelings exhibited, which led him to ask if the time had not now arrived when he could be no longer generally useful to his people. He could not answer the inquiry, but the people could: and it was his desire that they would accordingly give expression to their feeling. If the expression should be in favor of his leaving, he requested the church to unite with him in the call of a mutual council for the purpose of their advice in the premises.

Though he was calm when speaking, his people were deeply affected when hearing. Never before, probably, were more tears shed in that large house on one occasion than then. Never before, perhaps, did the people linger more, as if reluctant to leave their slips, than then. When the pastor descended from the desk he was surrounded by his weeping parishioners, and, as it were, with one voice asked, "What does all this mean, Mr. Eldridge?" "We shall not let you go." "Who has been making statements to you?"

At last, however, the sorrowing congregation separated. It was frequently wished by some who were in the secret that *Deacon Smith* and his company had not been in *such haste* to leave the church when the services were over. It was thought that, had they been present, a rebuke would have been administered in terms that would have never been forgotten by them. They knew, however, that *they had plunged the dagger, and did not care to witness its cruel effects.*

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PARISH MEETING AND COUNCIL.

How could the request detailed in the preceding chapter be made without producing the greatest commotion? All classes were roused by it, and every household circle had it for a common theme of conversation. Although some of the people were aware that Deacon Smith and a few others were restless and attempting the sundering of ties which had most happily and prosperously bound both pastor and people for twenty years, yet more were in entire ignorance of the whole matter. The multitude felt that Mr. Eldridge was as much as ever in possession of the love and confidence of the people.

The few who were apprised that the waters of strife were being stirred did not realize that any disastrous consequence would follow. They relied for the safety of the parish and the protection of the pastor upon what they supposed was the general love and respect of the people for Mr. Eldridge. Whatever Deacon Smith and those leagued with him might attempt, it was supposed by such individuals as Doctor Howard and Mr. Clay that all their efforts would be futile. When the great body of the people were enlightened in the course which had been pursued to provoke a request for a dismission, they, too, were not at a loss for the disposition such a request would have from a parish vote. Consequently all the friends of Mr.

Eldridge were impatient for the time to arrive when they could turn back this current which had been set in motion for the destruction of the quietude of the pastor and the peace and prosperity of the parish. They were persuaded that this might be most easily accomplished, and the bright prospects of their Zion in the continued usefulness of the pastor be fully restored. If the rebuke which might be administered in an overwhelming vote of both church and parish in favor of the pastor should not indicate to the opposition their complete impotency to do with Mr. Eldridge as they pleased, and thus lead them to retrace their steps and again be his friends and supporters, it was supposed that these individuals would at once leave and become attached to another religious community, and thus be no longer the means of dissension in their present relations. It was felt and argued that no increased burden would be imposed upon the parish should such be the result.

In the course of a week from the Wednesday following the Sabbath on which Mr. Eldridge communicated his request for a dismission, there was a meeting of the church for action upon it. It was a full and solemn meeting. To the dismay of all, neither *Deacon Smith* nor the two or three other brethren in sympathy with him were present. The deacon well knew the position of his brethren in the church in relation to the pastor. He well knew that he almost stood alone, and that his conduct had deeply wounded many a heart and exposed him to the almost general censure of his brethren. He had not the manliness, the moral courage, the encouragement of an approving conscience which were requisite to enable him to confront those whose peace he had invaded and whose prospects he had attempted to cloud and freely and ungenerously to state the motives by which he had been governed. The communication of the pastor was read and duly considered, and the vote in relation to it taken, from which it

appeared that all the brethren present were in favor of the continuance of the present pastoral relation. Because so general a development was made at this meeting of the greatest confidence in and affection for the pastor, all who were present felt themselves greatly comforted and strengthened in their convictions that the enemy would be easily foiled.

The parish meeting soon followed. When that occurred it was a most exciting day; for every one was impressed that there was to be a most important contest. The enemy might cower in the church and refuse a manly struggle, and yet on the whole no important advantage be lost; but in the parish there must be action, or there would be defeat; for the *law* has cognizance *only* of civil transactions, and lays no claim to jurisdiction over those which are ecclesiastical. All seemed to feel that there was something to be done; and at the hour at which the parish meeting was called a very large body of people had collected in the vestry where the meeting was held. It seemed as if every voter was present to share in the transactions which were anticipated. Squire Davidson, to the surprise of almost every individual, was out. Though long confined almost to the house with the infirmities of age, and, as he supposed, done with the active scenes of this world, yet his heart being deeply affected by the attempts which were making to remove his most highly-esteemed pastor from the pulpit he had long honored and the people he had so usefully and faithfully served, the squire girded himself up for the hour of battle, and appeared in the vestry with that energy and interest which perfectly astonished every one present. His son Charles, who for years had been a resident in the town where he was born, having left Virginia soon after the death of his mother for the purpose of relieving his father by his sympathy and care, was likewise no uninterested individual in this assembly.

Always in many respects like his father, in later years the resemblance became more complete by the addition of the graces of the Christian, to whose power he had yielded his heart almost from the date of his return to his present home. Little Arthur, who was there twenty years before when Mr. Eldridge was ordained, was in this meeting, and invested with no small interest in its results: for he was now an inhabitant of the town, and in the occupancy of the store over which his grandfather so long, so honorably, and so successfully presided. The attendance at the meeting was so large that it would be by far the easiest task to mention the names of the few in Mr. Eldridge's parish who were absent than to draw up a catalogue of those who were present. It was generally reported all were out at this meeting but such as were detained at home by infirmity and sickness.

Of course, then, Deacon Smith was there. Yes, *the deacon* was there, and all his league. There were more in the parish than in the church who were in sympathy with him in his feelings towards the pastor, and consequently there was a shield here in an increased number, which emboldened him to appear. Though the wealth of Colonel Presbury and the influence which opulence often imparts were with him, yet the deacon was very far from exhibiting in his countenance a happy frame of spirit. As he entered the vestry, and before the meeting was organized, he had every indication of a fear that he was a condemned man in the judgment of those with whom he had long been in fellowship in sustaining his pastor and forwarding the best interests of the parish, and a consciousness, too, that his own soul well approved, as most merited, this condemnation. He and the colonel were soon seated together, and near them were the minions who had aided them in bringing matters thus far to the interruption of pastoral peace and of parochial prosperity.

After the organization of the meeting and the reading of the communication of the pastor, the committee of the church presented to the parish the action of that body in relation to it. Whereupon a motion was immediately offered that the parish concur with the church in the disposition of the pastor's request for a dismission. This motion was made by a friend of Mr. Eldridge, who supposed that it would be at once carried by a large majority, and thus the unpleasant business of the meeting be summarily despatched, to the confusion and shame of those who had been laboring for another result. Other members of the parish and ardent friends of the pastor were not inclined to have the matter thus pass off. They wished a *disclosure* from those who had been active in creating the present excitement of the reasons by which they had been governed; and so, as one and another opposed the motion, the mover thereof at once withdrew it. A pause now ensued. It was expected that some of the individuals to whom it belonged to make this disclosure would at once be sufficiently magnanimous to gratify the assembly with a statement of the ground of their opposition to the pastor; but this *magnanimity did not appear*. At length Doctor Howard, after a conference with Squire Davidson and Mr. Clay, arose and gave to the meeting a history of the difficulties as he understood them, and concluded by calling on Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury and inquiring of them if what he had narrated was not correct. These gentlemen could not now well be silent. They had been publicly implicated, and necessity was laid upon them to speak. Deacon Smith accordingly arose and remarked that he had, it was true, been dissatisfied for some time with his pastor, and that others were likewise dissatisfied. He supposed that Mr. Eldridge, upon becoming acquainted with the fact that the feelings of many of his parishioners had changed towards him, would at once perceive that he

could no longer be as useful in his present relations as he had been, and thus be disposed in a *silent* manner to seek a dissolution of his connection with this people and enter another field of labor. He further remarked that he had, in company with Colonel Presbury, called upon the pastor and made to him a statement of the difficulties in relation to him. Colonel Presbury followed, and briefly recapitulated the statements of the deacon, but not in the least degree hinting at any conduct of the pastor which had provoked his dissatisfaction. The indefiniteness of these remarks from the head of the opposition to Mr. Eldridge impressed the multitude present with great dismay. It was supposed that, when Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury were drawn forth to define their position, they would at length give their reasons for their conduct in the form of complaints or charges against the pastor. But no; all that they uttered was the simple fact that they and some others were dissatisfied! Squire Davidson, it was observed, sat ill at ease after this *exposé* of the opposition, and at once rose and begged the privilege of putting a few questions to Deacon Smith. He asked him how long he had been with his present feelings towards his pastor. To this it was replied, "Not a year.' "What was the cause of his opposition?" Here the deacon rendered several evasive answers, which of course were unsatisfactory to his intelligent and searching catechist. "Was not the beginning of your opposition the fidelity of the pastor with your son, in whose behalf you entreated him with tears to interpose, that he might be saved from ruin?" The deacon here was dumb. "Did you not," continued the squire, "say to a certain individual that your son had deceived you in relation to his promised reformation, and that Mr. Eldridge had more eyes than yourself, and consequently was better informed in respect to the course your son was pursuing than you were,

and that, had you known at the beginning all that you subsequently ascertained, your feelings towards Mr. Eldridge would have been different?" To this the deacon made no reply. "Have you not said," the squire further asked, "that you thought our pastor had no business with the conduct of individuals — that it was wrong for him to seek out the faults of children and youth in his parish and blazen them forth to the world?" To these inquiries the deacon answered not a word.

"As the deacon is not inclined to reply to questions like those I have put to him," the squire remarked, "I will inquire of him further, if he was not well satisfied with Mr. Eldridge up to the time that he requested him to endeavor to save his son." The deacon at once replied that he was. "Was it not your opinion a year ago that Mr. Eldridge had the confidence and respect of all classes in the parish, and that he had been from year to year increasing in his usefulness among the people?" The deacon replied it was. "Have you not for twenty years thought that Mr. Eldridge was peculiarly adapted to this people: and have you not, both in town and out, often declared such as your opinion?" "Of course I have," the deacon said. "Now, then," said the squire, "I will ask you one more question. Do you think it fair and right to change your feelings towards a pastor for being faithful in doing what you earnestly requested him to do? It seems that your son became enraged at the watchfulness and fidelity of Mr. Eldridge, and that you have sympathized with him and become an enemy to your pastor, and been doing all that you could do for his injury. Now, deacon, is this right?" The deacon was evidently sensible of his position, and yet at a loss to know how to extricate himself from it. He appeared to catch the popular feeling that it was unfortunate for him to reply to some questions and be silent in relation to others; and so he rallied his energies and

attempted to answer the squire's last questions, but most egregiously failed. He justified himself in his opposition to Mr. Eldridge, and affirmed that he never could again be reconciled to him as his minister.

Having drawn from the deacon thus much, which was sufficient to show his palpable inconsistency, most glaring treachery, and excessive cruelty to his pastor, the squire turned to the colonel for the purpose of ascertaining his reasons for being desirous that his pastor should leave. The colonel instantly responded that he had been dissatisfied with Mr. Eldridge for many years. He thought that he had gone out of his proper sphere of action frequently and concerned himself with matters which ought not to have occupied his attention. Though he had been thus opposed, he had not made his feelings any way public until recently. He did not wish to injure the minister; and therefore, whilst others were satisfied with him, he was not disposed to disturb them in their enjoyment. The colonel proceeded some time in this course of general, indefinite remark, and of course did not satisfy any of those who wished for some tangible matter in relation to the conduct or preaching of Mr. Eldridge. Squire Davidson, as Colonel Presbury was about taking his seat, observed, that he would be pleased to have the gentleman a little more explicit in his declarations of dissatisfaction with the pastor. For this purpose he would inquire, "How many years since the colonel became dissatisfied with the pastor?"

The colonel replied "it must be ten or twelve since he first began to dislike him; and that he had been growing more and more dissatisfied ever since."

"What was the occasion of this dissatisfaction," the squire asked, "ten or twelve years ago? It must have been excited by some act or actions of the pastor, or by some discourse or discourses of his; and he would like to have the gentleman particular and explicit in the matter."

The colonel replied "that he had thought for years that Mr. Eldridge allowed himself to attend to things foreign to his profession."

"What things?" "*What things?*" inquired several individuals at once.

"Yes," said the squire, "what things, colonel, are there with which our pastor has been imprudently concerned?"

Whilst the colonel was reflecting a moment for a reply his cogitations were assisted by the inquiry from a number of voices, if the *old parish debt* was not one of the things, and *repairing the church* and *supplying* it with an organ another.

"Yes," said the colonel; "I confess these two things are what have disgusted me with our minister. I think a parish ought to be allowed to pay its own debts and to repair its meeting house when and how it pleases. A minister has no business to meddle with these affairs."

Mr. Clay then inquired of the colonel "if he were not in favor of having the old parish debt liquidated, and if he did not often say, before it was paid, that the parish ought to sell their lands and pay their debts."

The colonel replied that he was desirous of having the debt paid with the proceeds of the sale of the lands. He was then asked if Mr. Eldridge ever expressed an opinion as to the manner in which the debt should be paid, and if the debt was not paid as the parish saw fit to have it.

He replied that Mr. Eldridge never expressed any other opinion on the subject, as he was aware, but that the parish debt should be paid, and that the parish voted to pay it by tax.

"*Then why attach any blame to Mr. Eldridge in this matter?*" Squire Davidson asked; "as you allow the debt ought to be paid, and that the *parish voted* that it should

be paid by a tax, and that Mr. Eldridge *never expressed any opinion in conflict with your own in relation to the matter.*"

"Now, colonel," inquired the squire, "were you not in favor of repairing the church?"

"Yes; I was," the colonel said; "but I wished it done by subscription, and not by a tax."

"Did Mr. Eldridge advocate a tax?"

"Not that I ever heard," the colonel replied.

"Then," said the squire, "*why blame Mr. Eldridge in the matter?* He was for having the debt paid, and then he was for having the church repaired, because he conceived the prosperity of the parish would be thereby greatly advanced. He said nothing of the manner in which these things should be accomplished, but left it to the consideration of the people. *Why blame Mr. Eldridge, colonel?*" the squire asked, with much emotion. "It seems that you were dissatisfied with the parish for thinking it proper to have the debt paid and the church repaired by a tax, and that you seek *revenge* for the doings of the parish on the poor *minister. He must be dismissed* because the parish voted to do thus and so, though he had not any influence whatever in the doings of the parish, nor had he attempted any influence."

Dr. Howard here remarked, "that he had understood the colonel to say that he had confined his opposition to Mr. Eldridge within his own breast until recently, because he was not disposed to interrupt the enjoyment of any in their pastor. If this has been his position," the doctor observed, "*rumor* has done him great injustice; for he had been charged with having said, when the tax was made for the repairs of the church, *that he would in some way or other effect the dismission of Mr. Eldridge.* In accordance with this assertion, this same rumor had charged the colonel with having *purchased* the store now occupied by Mr. Dixon for *the very purpose* of having a place of rendezvous

where recruits in the war against the pastor might be drilled, and from whence an influence should go out to the hurt of the pastor. This same rumor has charged him with having opened his house for *secret meetings* to devise ways and means for effecting the dismission of Mr. Eldridge, and with having suggested to Mr. Otis to say to Mr. Conner, who was then supplying the pastor with wood, *that he had better put in small trash*, and *yet charge the same price* as for merchantable wood, promising him if he would do this vile thing that he would *liberally reward him.* These and other charges rumor has made against the colonel," the doctor remarked, "and he believed there was considerable evidence at hand to show that she has in these things not charged falsely."

Colonel Presbury now found himself in an *uncomfortable* condition, which he manifested in abuse of the doctor and others in no measured terms. He did not deny the charges which had been recited by the doctor, but very *boisterously* and *vehemently declaimed* against the pastor, and said, if he were not dismissed, the parish would be broken to pieces.

Mr. Charles Davidson inquired of Deacon Smith "if he or those opposed to Mr. Eldridge thought that there was any abatement in the pastor's power in the pulpit or activity among the people."

The deacon replied, "that every one confessed that Mr. Eldridge was a good preacher, and a diligent scholar, and an active minister. We all know these things," the deacon said; "but, then, there is now such a prejudice against him that we think it will be most *for his comfort*, usefulness, and reputation that he labor in some other community."

At this stage of the meeting Squire Davidson arose and remarked, "that it must be evident to all the parish what were the reasons which had governed the opposition to the pastor. Colonel Presbury became dissatisfied because the

parish saw fit to raise a tax for the liquidation of the old parish debt and for the repairing of the church. The colonel admits that he was in favor of both these measures, but wished to have the manner of raising funds for their execution different. He admits that Mr. Eldridge, to his knowledge, never expressed any opinion in relation to the way in which the debt should be paid or the money for the repairs of the church be raised, and yet he grounds his dissatisfaction with the pastor on the sermons which he preached to stir up the people to accomplish these very desirable objects. Had there been no tax, it is clear the colonel *would never have been opposed to the pastor*. Had the parish lands been sold for the one object, and a subscription made for the other, the colonel thinks he would have been saved a few hundred dollars! Because he could not do this he comes down with all his vengeance upon the *minister*, and must have him dismissed. In regard to Deacon Smith," the squire observed, "the case was simply this. His son became enraged with the pastor for doing what the father, with tears in his eyes, besought the good man to do. The wayward child deceived his father, and made him believe that the pastor was excessively uncharitable, and unreasonably severe and slanderous in his accusations; and so the deacon at once sympathizes with the son, and, without any conference with the pastor for explanation, becomes his inveterate enemy. Now," continued the squire, "these two individuals, Colonel Presbury and Deacon Smith, have fomented all the excitement which exists against the pastor. About the period that the deacon's feelings became estranged towards Mr. Eldridge Colonel Presbury had many logs at the deacon's mill to be sawed. Consequently he and the deacon were often together, and it became manifest to each other that both felt alike towards the pastor; and from this time have they acted together in relation to his dismission. There have always

been those in the parish (it is so in every parish) who are ready to take up arms against the minister under certain influences which are excited by wealth and station. These individuals have been summoned forth by the deacon and colonel; and there has been, it seems, constant agitation for nearly a year in secret places, and always under covert, for the purpose of effecting the dismission of our minister. This agitation has been *begun* and *carried on* by the *influence of Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury;* and if Mr. Eldridge should be dismissed, these two individuals will have been the whole cause of such dismission. But for them there would now have been peace and prosperity in this church and parish."

Colonel Presbury and Deacon Smith each replied to the squire, and they were both understood to admit that they were not assigned a false position by the gentleman who last spoke. They both urged the necessity of Mr. Eldridge's dismission on the ground that, if he did remain, there would be a great falling off in the congregation, as a new meeting house would be immediately built and another church and society formed.

To this a number of individuals replied at much length, and illustrated in a variety of ways the impossibility of another society being able to gather sufficient strength to live and flourish.

Evening now being near, and as many present resided remotely from the place of meeting, a motion was made for an adjournment for two weeks. From the manner in which this motion was received, it was evident that the meeting was not yet prepared for an adjournment. From several parts of the house the desire was expressed that there might be a declaration of feeling in relation to the main business of the meeting; viz., to act upon the communication of the pastor. Accordingly, for the gratification of this desire, the motion for adjournment was with-

drawn, when Mr. Clay moved that the parish concur with the church in its disposal of the request of Rev. Mr. Eldridge for a dismission. As soon as this motion was seconded, Colonel Presbury arose and addressed the meeting at great length. He set forth the *case* with which the whole *difficulty might be settled by the quiet withdrawal of the pastor* to another field of labor, which he doubted not he could soon find. He spoke of the evils of having two societies, where, in reality, only one was needed; and he urged all to consider well before they voted on the motion now before them.

Mr. Otis, Mr. Dixon, and one or two others of the opposition spoke pretty much after the manner of the colonel. The motion being now called for by several voices, it was put, when it was discovered that but nineteen were in the negative.

When this vote was declared it was apparent that the opposition were surprised at the comparative smallness of their number. They manifested such surprise by an attempt for a reconsideration of the vote, in which, through the courtesy of one of the majority in moving for such reconsideration, they were successful. The meeting was then adjourned for two weeks.

Deacon Smith and the colonel, on the next day after this meeting, were seen earnestly engaged in conversation with different people belonging to the parish. It was thought that they were invested with *new zeal* in their opposition to the pastor; for almost every subsequent day brought the report of their activity hither and thither in the parish. It was soon found that they were pursuing a different policy from that which had hitherto governed them. Instead of *cautiously* conversing with individuals to ascertain how strong were their sympathies for the pastor, and never betraying their own hostility when such sympathy was strong in his favor, they now boldly avowed

their dissatisfaction, and urged all who would not have the church and parish *rent asunder* to favor the dismission of Mr. Eldridge. Instead of waiting for individuals to come in their way, they now went about among the families and endeavored to bring all over to their own views of church and parish duty and interest. It would have been singular if, by such a course, they had not succeeded in shaking the faith of some and changing the policy of others. The deacon would urge a variety of reasons as occasion might demand to induce those whom he called upon to change their vote. He would appeal to the avarice of some by showing how much *more* the *taxes* would be for parish purposes if Mr. Eldridge should continue. He would appeal to the *pride* of some whose boast had often been that their parish was remarkable for its *unity* and for the *accommodating* spirit of its members. He would address the *pacific feelings* of some by portraying the many evils which would come upon the people if there should be two rival societies. Whether by the efforts of the deacon or colonel or not the change was effected, it is not known; but it began to be rife in the community before the expiration of the time for which the parish meeting was adjourned *that several had altered their minds, and, all things considered, that they thought it would be best for the people and best for Mr. Eldridge* if he should go. Many of these spoke in the highest terms of the pastor, and deeply *regretted* the necessity for his leaving, when, had they stood *firm, and had all stood firm*, there would have been no such necessity, though Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury had not abated aught of their active hostility.

In consequence of its being believed that the rumor above noticed was correct, it was judged best by Mr. Eldridge and some of his best friends at last, in consequence of his wishes to have it so, that if at the parish meeting it should be found that any very considerable number, though

not amounting to a majority, should deem it expedient for him to leave, for all to acquiesce in the measure.

The day to which the parish meeting was adjourned having arrived, at the hour appointed might have been seen about the same attendance as at the previous meeting. As the attention of the parish was called to the first business, to wit, the consideration of the pastor's request for a dismission, Mr. Babcock, one of the pastor's friends, arose and remarked that he had a motion to make which might *astonish* and pain many who should hear it. "Since the last meeting," he continued, "I have hardly thought long upon any other subject but the one which has here called us together; and I have come to the conclusion that *for the sake of peace, for the sake of preserving together this parish, it might be best for our pastor to leave us.* If he should, I feel that I can never again have so *faithful and instructive a pastor; but, for the sake of peace,* I am willing to give him up! I therefore move that in the opinion of the parish, all things considered, it is best that the relation of Mr. Eldridge as pastor should be dissolved."

Though it was known that Mr. Babcock was an amiable and lovely man, yet it was a matter of surprise to all that he should make such a motion, because of his strong attachment to his pastor. This act of his was considered as a *precursor* of a somewhat *general* change of feeling on the part of Mr. Eldridge's friends, and of course it was felt by some that the question was virtually decided that the pastor must leave. There was much discussion under this motion of the whole matter, in which a large number of individuals participated. Squire Davidson, Dr. Howard, and many others with great feeling opposed the motion; whilst it was advocated, not only by Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury, but by several who were known to be true friends to the pastor. These last advocated the dissolution of the pastoral relation entirely on the ground

of *expediency ;* and some of the thrusts which were made at Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury for their agency in bringing matters to the present crisis were so direct and severe as to make it almost impossible for them to consider those individuals, though with them in the present measure, as with them in any other. At length the vote was taken, and it appeared that fifty-two were in favor of the motion.

This vote, though by no means approaching a third, was deemed by some of the pastor's friends who had his peculiar confidence as being such a test of feeling as he desired should decide the question of his remaining. Accordingly it was moved that the last vote be reconsidered, which was done ; when the same motion was made and put again, and carried by forty-three votes in favor and none against.

The church soon after had a meeting for the consideration of this matter : and inasmuch as a vote had been carried in the parish in favor of the dismission of Mr. Eldridge, the church so far acquiesced in the arrangement as to vote to unite with the pastor in the calling of a council to submit the whole matter to them for advice.

It may appear strange to those who take a cursory view of the subject that such a change should have been effected in the feelings of Mr. Eldridge's parishioners as to bring matters thus far to favor his dismission. Many considerations in the period of dissatisfaction with a minister affect the judgment of a people. When the question of his dismission is *remote*, for the reason that the *majority* do not think it *probable* that the alienation existing in the breasts of a few will ever *amount* to any thing, it is very common for them to feel and to act as though they would part with a *right hand* as soon as part with *their pastor*. But when this alienation waxes into hot opposition and it looks as if there would be serious trouble to the church and parish unless the cause of it be removed, then many who are entirely satisfied with their pastor begin to think that, *on the*

whole, the *easiest* and *surest way to quell the storm* and bring back harmony in the different circles of the community is *for the pastor to leave*. It will be but a *little thing* for *him* to look up another parish, and then the one he leaves will be tranquil and happy! Thus easily is a minority, a small minority, of malcontents in a parish successful by the votes of those who all along have *condemned* their course. Thus it is that such malcontents are *encouraged* in their work of mischief and ruin.

In due time a council assembled, in accordance with the invitation of the church and pastor. They spent two days and a half in hearing testimony and in canvassing the matters submitted to their consideration, and at length arrived at a result, of which the following is the substance: —

"The council have, with careful and patient deliberation, examined into the condition of the church and people. They are entirely satisfied in the belief that for twenty years Rev. Mr. Eldridge had in a remarkable degree the love and confidence of his people. This position he enjoyed, as the council think, because of his uniform character for prayerfulness, for fidelity in preaching the true doctrines of the Bible, for fostering with lively interest the various benevolent societies of the day, and for his interest in all classes of his parish. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, have alike been the objects of his faithful interest and care. From the testimony submitted there cannot be a doubt that the pastor has been a most laborious student and a most faithful shepherd; and the council extremely regret that he should have been interrupted by any dissensions among the people in his useful labors and in carrying out the cherished purpose of his life. The council have had no evidence presented to them for showing that the pastor has not been wise and prudent. On the contrary, much has been submitted

which presents him as distinguished in a remarkable manner for wisdom and discretion, and for having those traits of character which fit him for extensive usefulness.

"In the present situation of both pastor and people we have striking proof of the power of an individual to produce alienation and strife — to produce discord and calamity. Truly 'one sinner destroyeth much good.' It seems, by the evidence before the council, that one individual took offence for having been obliged to pay a tax at two distinct periods and for different objects when he thought the parish could have gained their purposes in another manner. Because the pastor called attention in his sermons to these different objects, which required the attention of the parish, would they look out well for their own prosperity, this individual became inimical to him, though he confessed that the pastor had advocated nothing more than what was reasonable and proper. If the pastor had not preached two sermons, —one in favor of liquidating an old parish debt, and the other in favor of remodelling the church, — this wealthy individual thought there would have been no call for money, and thus his own purse would have been untouched. Because it was touched, he became dissatisfied with the pastor and vowed vengeance upon him. So craftily, though slowly, this individual endeavored to undermine the pastor; but it probably would have been a hopeless undertaking had not an *officer of this church confiderated with him*. When the council consider the circumstances in which Deacon Smith was when he avowed opposition to his pastor, they are overwhelmed with the deepest sorrow at the ingratitude which followed the faithful efforts of the pastor to restore an erring son to his right mind, to the arms of an affectionate father. From these two individuals, therefore, the council are convinced the present difficulties in the parish

have arisen. Had Colonel Presbury and Deacon Smith not allowed themselves to act as they have acted, we are satisfied we should have had no duties to discharge here. The council exceedingly regret *that the pastor's friends did not all of them remain steadfast*. Had they done so, there probably would have been *no cause* for the rupture of ties which have bound pastor and people for so many years. Had they remained steadfast, they had not *encouraged* evil doers in their work of iniquity.

"As matters now are in the parish, the council see no other alternative for the settlement of their difficulties but the dismission of the pastor. Though painful in the extreme to them, they do advise to his dismission; and they most sincerely commend him to the churches as a most able and efficient minister of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"The council would sympathize with their dear brother in his blasted hopes. They know his views — and greatly appreciate them — of the importance of the permanent ministry, and they deeply deplore the unrighteous causes which have severed him from a people to whom he has been singularly useful, and in whose service it was his hope to remain till death. Their prayer is, that he may be divinely sustained and directed."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE EX-PASTOR.

It would be difficult to discover stronger emotions towards those not connected with an individual by the bonds of nature than what the faithful pastor cherishes towards the people of his charge. His grand purpose of life, one for which his entire education and his complete energies are consecrated, being to serve his Lord and Savior here upon the earth in gathering unto him many sons and daughters, it is impossible for him to have any other feelings towards the people of his charge but those of the warmest sympathy and the most unwearied care. He contemplates them all as born to immortality, and he feels that he has been commissioned as an instrument for arresting their attention to this exalted birthright, and to guide their feet in the narrow path which conducts to eternal joys. He is impelled, therefore, to activity for their good both by the deepest love for his Savior and the warmest affection for his people. So much absorbed is he in the welfare of his people that he is interested in every event in which they are interested. In their concerns of time, their plans, and in their success, in their individual interests and their social capacity, the faithful pastor has almost the same strength of feeling which throbs in their own bosoms. Are they prosperous in their worldly projects, he rejoices. Are they hindered in these and disap-

pointed, and consequently in trial at their disappointments, he is likewise tried with them, and ready, by counsel and other aid, to cheer them in further attempts at success. Does disease attack any of his beloved people, the pastor is at their bedsides to sympathize both with the invalid and those bound to the sick one by love, and fervently praying to the great Physician to send healing remedies, and at once stop the wasting process and give strength and health. Does the great foe of humanity, Death, invade any circle in community of the pastor, what friend is sooner in the house of mourning than he, or with more compassion in his heart or sympathy on his tongue? Whatever may be the condition of his people the pastor is quick to learn and to know, and as ready to aid in making all their varied experience contribute to work out for them a welfare as large, complete, and durable as can be found around the throne of Jehovah.

Has the connection between pastor and people subsisted for years; has he received from them many and varied expressions of their affection, confidence, and esteem; has his own love for those over whom the Holy One made him overseer augmented with every revolving year; has he often sung for joy and praised his God and Savior for giving him so many seals of his ministry and crowns of his eternal rejoicing; and does he with pride contemplate his mature powers and enlarged experience as furnishing him with *greater* power to do his Master's work and gather still a larger number of seals and crowns than what are already garnered up; and in his revery is he disturbed by a faint rumor that Dissension is taking her seat in the breasts of one or two of the prominent individuals of his charge; does this rumor, though scouted by the multitude, as telling of something which can never do harm, yet haunt the good man in his study, and in his walks, and in all his ways to such an extent as to give rise to the fear

among the many confiding ones in his parish that the pastor's health is failing; do the dissentients work on, scattering their baneful seeds, and diligently watch their germinating process, and joyfully espy them as they shoot forth here and there in the parish; and at length are they so rank and offensive as to excite strong apprehension in almost every mind that their removal is alone indispensable to general health and happiness; and, *to their removal, must the pastor's position be changed? Must he be sacrificed?* Ah, what then? Not much. *It is but a little thing;* let him *die.* The event will cause a little commotion for a time; but soon it will be forgotten, and the community in which he long lived and faithfully and successfully ministered, when he is decently buried, will rise up and call him blessed.

Mr. Eldridge endured the trial of separation from his people in such a manner as made the cursory observers remark that its effects on his health and spirits were far more slight than they had anticipated. All in the community were fully aware of his sentiments and feelings in relation to the pastoral office — that he deemed a *fluctuating ministry* of disastrous consequence both to the clergy and the people. All knew, too, what had been his feelings in relation to his own pastorate; how that from the period of his ordination, through each successive year of his pastoral life, he had planned and labored, not only for *immediate* success, but for *ulterior* benefits to his people in years to come; that his foundations were so laid as to require, not only the fervor of *youth* and the energy of *manhood*, but the *experience* and *wisdom of age*, to rear and complete the superstructure, so that those who should come after him might comprehend the happy effects of his ministry and future generations be partakers of its benefits. By reason of this knowledge, it was feared that, in being arrested in his progress when his plans were but partly

executed and his work but partly completed, he would exhibit some clear signs of sad disappointment and of deep despondency. If such exhibition was not made to the cursory observer, it was because Mr. Eldridge could control his emotions and repress the risings of sadness when individuals were about him whom he did not care to introduce into the inner chambers of his soul. It was not because he was indifferent to the position in which he had been placed, in consequence of being stopped in his pastoral career in the period of life when he was best fitted by knowledge, experience, and wisdom to perform the labor he had reserved for this period of his ministry, that every individual whom he met did not discover despondency and grief in him. Of this there was abundant evidence from his intimate friends, who had frequent opportunity for learning the real effects his dismission were producing upon him. These traced disappointment, and sadness, and woe in the many expressions he made to them of his feelings and in the mournful spectacle which they were compelled to witness of his staggering courage and withering energies. *The intimate friends of* Mr. Eldridge *felt that he was almost overcome* by the rupture of his pastoral relation. They feared that he would be completely unfitted for further usefulness to the church and the world unless by a change of scenes his thoughts should be diverted from the parish and the things therewith connected. Accordingly he was persuaded to enter on a course of travel, by which he was detained from home some two months, and to his partial benefit.

Though in his absence his sensibilities to what had lately passed had become somewhat blunted, yet Mr. Eldridge was an *unhappy* man. His friends made many attempts to persuade him to anticipate another settlement and to put himself in a way to invite such a blessing; but to all such kind interpositions for his own good he would reply that he had *once* settled for life — had planned, had

executed, with all his wisdom and talents, to be the most useful to the people of his charge, and that his *pastoral* life had *ceased*. In process of time, however, he arranged his course to his condition, and was occupied in literary labors, in the care of his lands and trees, and in the occasional supply of pulpits vacant for a season through the sickness, vacation, or dismission of pastors.

It was five months from his dismission before he found himself unoccupied in other pulpits; and thus this length of time passed without his spending a Sabbath at home and appearing in the sacred temple as a parishioner. This was a Sabbath of great trial to him, and, from appearances and expressions, of great trial to the large body of the people. Success had not attended the efforts made by Colonel Presbury and Deacon Smith, who were the committee for supplying the pulpit; and the people were yet hearing candidates. The one who officiated on this occasion, though a goodly man and of good reputation, was singularly unfortunate in not securing the special favor of any. Whether his complete *unlikeness* to Mr. Eldridge, or the rise of impatient or revengeful feelings on the part of those who never desired a change of pastors, produced a general outburst of dissatisfaction among the people as they emerged from the sanctuary in the morning, is not known; but the committee did not deem it advisable to employ him further. Doubtless the presence of Mr. Eldridge excited many to make comparisons much to the prejudice of the man the committee had introduced as a candidate for popular favor and the pastorate.

During the period that passed whilst the parish were without a pastor of fifteen months, Mr. Eldridge received many and varied expressions of respect and affection from the largest part of his late charge. These, occurring at intervals, had a happy effect in reviving his spirits and soothing his feelings; but, then, the fact would at last

ascend and overpower these expressions that he was an exile from the people of his first love, and plunge him into despondency and grief at the continued reflection that further opportunity to complete to his mind his ministry was forever cut off. Though he made vigorous attempts to rise over such emotions, yet he could not succeed. At his ordination he felt that he was set apart as the minister of the church and parish till *death* or his own *misconduct* should *remove* him; and as neither of these had intervened to end his ministry, he thought he ought still to have continued the recipient of the vows which were made to him at that period by his church love.

It may have been an error in Mr. Eldridge thus to have felt. Doubtless some, without hesitation, will pronounce it so; but if every pastor for the last half century had been inspired with his feelings of the sanctity of the pastoral relation, and had attached his value to its permanency, and had labored as wisely, as variously, as abundantly as he did to be a minister that need not to be ashamed, he probably might have been saved from such error, in never being called to the trial from which it sprung. There cannot be a doubt that, under such a ministry as his for fifty years, our churches and our parishes would never have passed through the rendings and the wranglings which have enfeebled so many and sent a general reproach upon them all; for *public sentiment* would undoubtedly have been encouraged by such a ministry in the conviction that the permanent ministry is the most productive of good. Had pastors for the period above mentioned been as deaf to invitations popularly denominated "*loud calls*" as was Mr. Eldridge, the *foundation stones* to the permanency of the pastoral relation might not have been disturbed. Had they frowned upon the fickleness of the people as he did upon their caprice, upon their every attempt to disturb those bonds into which they

most solemnly entered with their pastors, and thus made it *not an easy matter* for one or two restless spirits to operate upon the entire mass, and remove, for a slight or no cause, a faithful, useful, and devoted minister, the task of dismissing a pastor would not, probably, have been one to be undertaken as a *very feasible project*. But for the *example* which *almost every parish around* had set of the facility in effecting a change of pastors, Mr. Eldridge would have continued his ministrations to the people over whom he was ordained till his Master took him to his reward in heaven. Both Deacon Smith and Colonel Presbury were well aware how successfully men like themselves *had worked in other places* who had conceived a prejudice towards faithful pastors: and therefore *they* were *encouraged* to gratify their own wicked feelings in the imitation of the same inglorious precedent.

A successor at length was found and settled in the parish of which Mr. Eldridge had long been the successful and useful minister. To many it was a matter of great surprise that the people should have extended their suffrages thus, when it was known abroad that they had *rejected* many other candidates of *far more* promise both from their talents and literary acquisitions. The man of their choice had *failed* in other smaller parishes to gain a popular vote because he was deemed not sufficiently great and talented to be the means of their prosperity. None doubted his piety or questioned his sincerity: but there seemed to be the feeling in many places where he had preached as a candidate that he had not the power demanded to build up and make flourish a religious community. However, he received the votes of the people where Mr. Eldridge had ministered, and was duly commissioned as their pastor.

As was to be expected, the affections of the people began to be intwined about the young minister. It was

right and proper that the shepherd should be loved. No one was more ready to encourage such a feeling in all over whom he had any influence than Mr. Eldridge. He himself was well disposed towards his successor, and regarded him as able to do much good in the service of his Lord and Master. Whilst, however, many of the parish greatly loved their present minister, Mr. Eldridge had very soon *a new trial* in the *ease* with which the former pastor could be put into the *shade*, and be treated with indignity by those even who had to the very last period of his connection with them, and even up to the time when a successor was ordained, manifested the greatest love and respect. Whilst he was not expecting nor desiring to have the affections and respect *of the pastor* continued to him, yet, as he highly prized the *ministerial* office and had done nothing to mar his own character as one of its incumbents, *he was expecting* that the respect due a minister of Christ would be awarded him. Whilst this was done always by such characters as Dr. Howard, Mr. Clay, and the Davidsons, yet there were others, who had been equal to these in their expressions of respect and affection, who were inclined *now* to treat him with the equality and rudeness that governed them in their intercourse with those who had ever been on the same level with themselves. They seemed to think and to act as if the *dismission* of a minister *had destroyed his ministerial character* and left him a *layman*. By reason of this feeling, manifested by a portion of the people in different ways and on various occasions, Mr. Eldridge was most severely tried. As he had regarded all classes in the community with extreme interest, and labored abundantly for their good, and been by all acknowledged instrumental of great benefits to them as their minister, he was expecting that gratitude for *past* services would prompt to kind and

respectful treatment when in the providence of God it was no longer in his power to minister to them; but in such expectation he was disappointed, and often had to mourn over the *ease* with which he could be *forgotten*, or be treated with indignity and coldness. For this reason he could not in his private capacity do many things which he would for the interest and edification of the community. He did not wish to expose himself to the inconsiderate animadversions of any, or to take upon himself trusts which a few might wish to have fall upon another. Therefore he *preferred* to keep himself *aloof* from a promiscuous assembly, and, when not abroad on professional duty, to confine himself within his own enclosures. Though requested often by some to be present in meetings for conference and prayer, he was obliged to deny himself the pleasure and the profit of such means of spiritual improvement in consequence of having heard or seen how ruthlessly *some* who were always at these meetings *handled his character* and *interpreted his motives*. He lamented such a state of feeling towards him, because it *deprived* him of power to be useful in a *private capacity* where he had long publicly labored.

Another trial of the ex-pastor had its source in the smallness of value which was often placed on his official services abroad. It was known that Mr. Eldridge was dismissed. Parish committees who had in charge the supply of pulpits vacated by pastors who were enjoying abroad their three and four weeks of vacation were aware that Mr. Eldridge was dismissed. He was often applied to in these circumstances to supply the vacancy. But in what manner was the application made? Often after the manner of the one we will now detail.

Mr. Eldridge had been at home on a Monday morning but a few minutes, having spent the previous Sabbath in a

neighboring town, where for a few weeks past he had been preaching, when he was visited by a gentleman who introduced himself as Mr. Crosby.

* * * * * *

"I suppose our minister has left home to-day," Mr. Crosby remarked, "to be absent four weeks. When he was settled it was agreed by the parish that he might have four Sabbaths in each year to himself, and that they would supply the pulpit. Many of our people have expressed a desire to hear you preach, Mr. Eldridge; and I have called to see if you could supply our pulpit the next Sabbath."

"I have no engagement," Mr. Eldridge replied, "for the next Sabbath; and I think I can accommodate you."

"I suppose," Mr. Crosby observed, "that I ought to say that our people don't feel as if they ought to pay two ministers. They raise for our pastor eight hundred dollars a year; and many feel that they are already taxed too much for his support. We don't expect to obtain a minister to supply Mr. Freeman's place without giving a *little something;* but we can't *afford* to pay the full price. Could you go under such circumstances?"

"How much do you propose to give?" Mr. Eldridge inquired.

"Some of us have thought," Mr. Crosby said, "we might raise *four* or *five* dollars a Sabbath."

"That would about meet the expenses of a journey to your place," Mr. Eldridge observed.

"I suppose," Mr. Crosby said, "it would cost four or five dollars to go there and back."

"Well," said Mr. Eldridge, "I suppose your people are able to raise much more than they now do for preaching if they were disposed. I have often passed through your town, and have noticed that you have a large population and a very fine meeting house. Your farms indicate both wealth and prosperity."

"O, yes, there is considerable wealth in our place, I know," Mr. Crosby remarked; "and, as you intimate, the people are sufficiently able to raise more money for preaching than they now do; but, then, they would not do it."

"Do you think it would be just in your people to employ a clergyman to supply their pastor's place while he is absent and not remunerate him for his labor when they have so much ability?"

"Why, no," Mr. Crosby replied. "We expect to pay, as I said, a *little something*."

"But four or five dollars, the sum you named, would only about pay my expenses should I preach for you next Sabbath. There would be *little* or *nothing left for my services*," Mr. Eldridge said.

"*You would have* an *opportunity* to *preach*," Mr. Crosby remarked. "It would not be necessary for you to make any preparation, as you probably have a great many *old sermons*. Ministers who are dismissed, I have always thought, love to preach *whenever* they can *find* a place."

This latter remark very sensibly affected Mr. Eldridge; but, suppressing his feelings, he observed, —

"I always am ready to preach the gospel whenever there is a call of Providence for me so to do. I can have opportunity to preach nearer home than your place to a people who are really unable to afford much compensation; and, when I have services to *give away*, I prefer going there. I should expect to be *far more successful* in such a place in doing good than in a community where there is abundant ability, *but no disposition* to compensate a minister."

"I have supposed that it was *common* for parishes situated as we are, when their pastors were away in their vacation, to get their preaching for *little* or *nothing from dismissed ministers*," Mr. Crosby said.

"That may be, said Mr. Crosby. I fear it is too true; but, then, it is nevertheless *very unjust*. Dismissed minis-

ters usually need all the compensation they can obtain for their services whenever they preach ; for it is from their labors that their families are to be supported. I have always thought that they should be fully compensated whenever they were called upon to preach. It has ever been my practice to pay a brother minister who supplied my place in my absence *the full price*. A *dismissed minister* can no better afford to give away his services than a *pastor*. The people in Bedford parish set a very good example to other communities in the matter of paying clergymen who supply the place of the pastor in his vacation."

"What is that?" Mr. Crosby inquired.

"I lately saw a minister, who had been supplying that people whilst the pastor was relaxing himself abroad in his vacation, who informed me that they gave their minister seven hundred dollars a year and the privilege of being absent four Sabbaths. They considered these four Sabbaths in which he was absent as *important* as any *other* four Sabbaths ; and they usually paid the individuals who supplied the vacancy each Sabbath in *proportion* to the salary of the pastor. 'We do so,' the good deacon of the church remarked, 'because it is, in the first place, *right ;* and, in the next place, from *respect to our pastor*. If we should *beg* our preaching or but *half pay for it*,' he said, 'for four Sabbaths every year when our pastor is absent, he would think *we did not value his vacation much*. Now, he knows that his salary is in reality equal to seven hundred and fifty dollars a year ; for it costs us about fifty dollars to pay for his four Sabbaths in which he is away.'"

"Well, Mr. Eldridge," Mr. Crosby remarked, "if you will come and preach for us next Sabbath you shall have ten or twelve dollars, if I have to pay it all myself."

* * * * * *

In the course of a few days after the above conversation Mr. Eldridge received a visit from a friend from abroad

with whom he had been in most friendly correspondence for years. Though a layman, yet he was interested in the condition of the clergy, and on various occasions had evinced this interest much to the relief and encouragement of this most important class of the community. Whilst he was the guest of Mr. Eldridge a variety of subjects were introduced, as well those of a general nature as of personal interest. From some inquiries made of her husband by Mrs. Eldridge relative to the interview he had lately had with Mr. Crosby above alluded to, and the facetious replies of Mr. Eldridge, the curiosity of Mr. Lawrence was awakened, to satisfy which it became necessary that the character of the conversation be described. This being done, Mr. Lawrence remarked, with deep emotion, —

"My feelings have often been severely tried at the manner in which the services of dismissed ministers are often treated. Many people seem to suppose that they can obtain them, when they are not particularly engaged, to preach a Sabbath for little or no compensation, and that *then they are rather conferring than receiving a favor in asking them to preach.*"

"I have felt very differently since I was dismissed," Mr. Eldridge said, "in relation to this subject from what I ever did before, probably for the reason that I have known more about it than formerly."

"I have a neighbor at home who is a clergyman," Mr. Lawrence remarked, "who was dismissed on account of ill health a year or two since, and from him I have learned much of the manner in which people are disposed sometimes to treat the poor minister. I never heard him complain with any degree of censure, but rather he always alluded to the subject with sorrow; for he is a most excellent man, and one to whom our people have become much attached. He has told me that he has often been

called upon to supply the pulpits of parishes where there was a vacancy for one or two Sabbaths, occasioned by the absence of the pastors, when he was requited with *nothing more than the sum necessary to cover his expenses*, as the same were ascertained by the parish committee, whose duty it was in behalf of the parish to give full compensation; for the pastor had the right of absence. On one occasion he said he was asked how much he would have to pay for his horse and carriage; and the sum being one dollar and seventy-five cents, the committee man asked him, on handing him a two-dollar bank bill, if he could give him back the *remaining quarter*, as it was impossible for him to make change."

"Why did he not demand full compensation," Mr. Eldridge inquired, "if the service was rendered in accordance with the request of the committee, and if it belonged to the parish, and not to the pastor, to make compensation?"

"He is a very *modest man*," Mr. Crosby replied, "and *trustful*, and is disposed to receive what is bestowed rather than to make a demand for what is justly his due."

"I cannot think that there are many parishes who would be guilty of such mean injustice," Mr. Eldridge remarked.

"There are some, however, who practise in this way, I am persuaded," Mr. Crosby said; "and *you ministers, too*," he continued with a smile, "sometimes do the thing in relation to a dismissed brother which is not altogether right."

"What do you refer to?" inquired Mr. Eldridge.

"I have heard," Mr. Lawrence replied, "upon authority which I consider unquestionable, that *sometimes* pastors have found it for their interest to be absent from their people on a Sabbath, and that, to supply their pulpit, they have sought a dismissed minister who had no other source of supporting a family but preaching, and have not been very liberal in their compensation."

"So far as my knowledge extends," Mr. Eldridge remarked, "I have found in pastors who were settled strong sympathy towards their brethren who were without pastoral charge and a readiness to aid them in every way in their power. I have known of many instances where pastors have sought the aid of such brethren when they have been sick or absent from their people, and have paid them the *full price* for their services. Nevertheless, *it may be* that what you intimate is correct. I have never happened to know of any instances of illiberality in pastors towards those whom they employed to supply their place in the pulpit."

"Perhaps I have been in a *better situation* for hearing about these matters than yourself," Mr. Lawrence said. "At any rate, I have learned some pretty hard stories on this subject."

"What are some of them?" Mr. Eldridge asked.

"To be fair," Mr. Lawrence replied, "I must state that I have known of great liberality on the part of some pastors to the brethren who have preached for them in their absence. I hope contrary instances are rare, but I *am afraid* that they might be *more uncommon*. Not long ago there was a pastor who thought he might be *more eligibly* settled and who took some considerable pains to effect a change of condition. He would *seek* an invitation to preach a Sabbath in some *large and popu'ar parish* where they were in *want* of a pastor, and would supply his own pulpit with the services of a brother in the neighborhood who had been dismissed, giving him *six dollars* per Sabbath, and receiving from the destitute parish *fifteen*. Now, what do you make of such conduct?"

"If that is true," Mr. Eldridge said, "I most sincerely regret it."

"There is no doubt of its correctness; for I happened to hear of the case through the brother who supplied this

pastor, and he knew how much this destitute parish paid the individual whom he supplied ; *for he was soon after called there to preach himself, and was informed by the parish committee.* I have heard of several similar cases."

"It may be," Mr. Eldridge said, "that I shall yet know more on this subject. Since I have been dismissed I have learned some things which I did not before know, and it may be that I shall have some experience myself. I may be called to supply the place of some brother who will give me a third of what he receives."

"I have an instance in mind," Mr. Lawrence said, "which greatly puts in the shade this last case I mentioned. In our state, a clergyman who was settled over a large congregation was sent by the people a representative to the legislature. He received for his services there fourteen dollars a week. Sometimes he would preach at home and sometimes he would exchange. Sometimes he would be called upon to preach in some of the towns near where the legislature met when they were destitute of a pastor, and receive *ten or twelve dollars ;* and then he would send to his own people a brother to whom he would give *five dollars.* I have heard a poor minister, with a large family dependent upon him, tell me that he had *five* dollars for supplying the pulpit of this individual, when he, *the very week*, was receiving for his services in the *legislature* and for supporting a *destitute* pulpit *twenty-six dollars*, which, added to his regular salary at home, would amount to about *thirty-eight dollars.* Now, what do you think of this?"

* * * * * *

Mr. Eldridge found another embarrassing trial as an ex-pastor in his relation to his successor. He was aware of the adage, almost as ancient as the practice of changing pastors, that "Dismissed ministers make poor parishioners ;" but he always regarded it as a slanderous impu-

tation, without good foundation. He saw no reason why an individual who had filled the pastoral office should in private life be in the least detrimental to the reputation, comfort, success, or usefulness of the regular pastor. On the contrary, many considerations were suggested to his mind whereby he was induced to believe the ex-pastor might be of great advantage in every way to his successor or to the minister of the place in which he resided. An ex-pastor knows the trials of the ministry, and is largely in experience of the many ways of disposing of difficult and embarrassing circumstances which are continually occurring in the history of the pastor to give him heavy trial and great perplexity. By reason of this knowledge he is qualified to impart important aid in seasons of difficulty, and his own sympathetic disposition would prompt him to render such aid in the hour when it might be needed. Mr. Eldridge early *determined* that he would thus assist his successor and be unto him a true friend and counsellor. There was nothing in his soul to persuade him to a contrary course ; for he was *interested in the people of his late care*, and was *favorably inclined* towards their present minister. He neither allowed any censure to escape his own lips upon any conduct of his successor, nor would he hear such censure, without rebuke, from *others*. In a variety of ways he endeavored to *smooth* the path of his successor and to make all things move on easily and for good. Yet he *soon perceived that his efforts were not appreciated*, and at length had unmistakable evidence that there was *no disposition* on the part of the individual whose true usefulness and happiness he was consulting to *reciprocate* friendly attentions. Rumor brought to him the intelligence that he was regarded by his successor with *jealousy*, and contemplated more like an *enemy* than a *friend ;* and this was strengthened by the *demeanor* of the *successor*. The *little courtesies* in the power of one minister to show

another were intermitted, and there were *formality* and *coldness* in the manner of the successor whenever he met the man who had preceded him in the pastoral office. Mr. Eldridge was at length treated by him more like an offended parishioner than a true friend and brother minister. It was a long period before he could understand the reason of this treatment; but the mystery was at length removed in a conversation Mr. Eldridge had with a neighboring minister, Mr. Waldo, who called upon him in the expression of kindness and friendship which for years had been unabated.

"I have been lecturing your successor a little this afternoon," Mr. Waldo observed.

"Ah," replied Mr. Eldridge; "pray tell me what he has been doing to provoke your fatherly rebukes."

"*I was not at all pleased with the manner in which he talked about you*," Mr. Waldo said. "From his conversation I judged that he looked upon you rather as an enemy than a friend."

"He is very much deceived if he considers me *an enemy*," Mr. Eldridge said.

"Yes, I told him so," Mr. Waldo remarked. "I told him he had no more sincere friend or well wisher in the parish than Mr. Eldridge. I asked him for the least evidence to sustain his position; but he could not present any; he said he had nothing tangible. I asked him if he had treated *you* as a *friend*, as one in whom he had confidence. He replied that he had endeavored to treat you *with respect*, but that he had never considered you among *his particular friends*. He remarked that he had always heard that dismissed ministers made poor parishioners; *and he determined from the first to be on the lookout for Mr. Eldridge, and not suffer him to get the advantage of him.* The last expression unravelled to my mind the whole matter, and excited my indignation and sorrow. I told him

that *I knew you well*, and that I knew that you would do him all the good it were in your power to render him. His attitude, '*being on the lookout*,' *had made the entire difficulty.* 'Now,' said I, 'I will tell you how I treat dismissed ministers. I have two in my parish, and they are among my best friends. I call upon them often. I unbosom myself to them. I sympathize with them and endeavor to aid them. I treat them as *ministers.* I ask them to preach occasionally, and among my people *I always speak well of them* and *encourage the people to treat them with kindness and respect.* I have never had any difficulty from their being in the parish, and I never expect any *unless I make it.*' I told him that I believed three fourths of the trouble from dismissed ministers arose from the pastors themselves, from their suspicions *from their being on the lookout for them.* Would pastors treat their brethren who happen to move into their parishes with kindness, and as ministers, I do not believe there would be much trouble from them as parishioners."

"You have expressed my sentiments," Mr. Eldridge remarked. "I am of the opinion that, were pastors to act the part of friends at all times to their brethren who happen to be their parishioners, and treat them as ministers and brethren, they would find it both for their usefulness and happiness."

"I advised our good brother to alter in his feelings and course towards you," Mr. Waldo said, "and assured him that he would most certainly find his reward."

"I should be very happy to have him more cordial," Mr. Eldridge said; "and I really think, *if he became well acquainted with me, that he would discover that he had made a mistake.*"

* * * * * *

Two years passed away in the life of Mr. Eldridge as an ex-pastor. Whilst he was always well employed, either

in the preparation of articles of sterling value for our literary and theological reviews or in preaching the gospel to some destitute people, yet he continued to sigh and to lament over the interruption of his pastoral duties and the disarrangement of the plans he had formed at the *beginning* of his profession — a career for *making his ministerial life as complete and useful as possible.* Efforts were frequently made, both by his ministerial and other friends, to have him look out for another pastorate ; but to them all he turned a deaf ear. He had been once settled, and that for life, and his sensibilities would not suffer him to settle again ; for he was satisfied that he could not be useful, after his own ideal of usefulness, to another people. However, so many were the embarrassments attending his life as an ex-pastor that he finally consented to entertain the plan of a connection with a literary institution which some of his friends were maturing. In process of time he was elected a professor in one of our western colleges ; and, after much anxious suspense, he accepted the appointment.

Now a new trial came. Through legacies of relations he had been enabled to purchase a well-built and beautiful house, to which were attached about twenty acres of land in the highest degree productive. He made this purchase *when all things in his parish favored the conclusion that he would not need any other house or home than this.* He had expended much treasure in the improvement of his lands. Trees of various kinds were on its hills and in its valleys, and on its plains were seen the tall and waving grass in its season, being evidence that a skilful, and practical, and industrious hand had correctly prepared the soil for such a goodly return of crops. The garden, too, and the large enclosure around the house, had signally changed aspects since they had been in the occupancy of Mr. Eldridge, exhibiting the most pleasing beauty as well as affording many substantial comforts. Amidst the shrubbery

and under the trees which his own hands had planted his sons and daughters had gambolled and played; and, whilst he had seen them thus employed, he had often thought that, whilst he lived, *they would never know another father's house.* But *now* house and lands were to be sold, to prepare the way for a removal to a distant home. After refusing one and another offer as being far too small, Mr. Eldridge at last succeeded in disposing of his estate, *but at a sacrifice of over a thousand dollars.* Soon after he and his family were settled at the west he at once entered on his new duties as professor. Here, however, he was not happy, nor were his family contented. He was not busy, after his strong desire, in searching the Scriptures and bringing forth the beaten oil for the sanctuary, for the edification and salvation of the people of his charge. At the circumstances which interrupted this his chosen labor he would often halt and over them would he in sadness muse. He could not recover himself from this most melancholy retrospection; and at last he fell a victim to disease, superinduced, in the opinion of medical advisers, by grief and despondency. He thus fell after a residence of a little more than a year in his new home, to the grief of many friends who had learned his worth in the short period of their acquaintance with the man.

But for his dismission from a people among whom he had been signally useful, through the crafty perseverance of one or two individuals in operating to his hurt till *the many believed expediency demanded his removal,* Mr. Eldridge, to all probability, would have continued till old age or death gathering stars for the crown of his rejoicing forever amidst the people of his *first* and *only* love.

A VOICE FROM THE PARSONAGE, or *Life in the Ministry*, with an Introductory Chapter by PROF. PARK, D. D., of the Theological Seminary at Andover. Boston: published by S. K. Whipple & Co., 100 Washington St. A volume of 500 pages. Price, $1. Second Edition.

The object of this work is to *benefit* the Pastors of our churches, and to help those in every religious community, who are anxious for peace and prosperity in their own locality, to accomplish this desirable object. Its wide circulation in every Parish cannot fail to accomplish great good. The matter of the work is so various, that almost every cause of disquietude to the minister is met by it. There is no work so particular in its notice of every source of trouble in a parish, and of anxiety to the pastor, as this. A pastor, therefore, in taking special pains to have the volume extensively circulated in his parish, *would be laboring to make the most of his ministry.* The first edition excited the interest and obtained the hearty approval of individuals high in the confidence and respect of the community, and received from the secular and religious press the most flattering notices.

To awaken in you an interest in the volume, and induce you to aid in its circulation in your community, a few extracts from the opinions which have been expressed, are here given.

From Rev. Dr. Ide, West Medway.

I have read the work entitled "A VOICE FROM THE PARSONAGE, or *Life in the Ministry*," with much interest and satisfaction. It is a *very readable and instructive volume;* one which few that commence the perusal of its pages, will lay aside until they have read it through. It is, in my view, suited to exert a good influence, both on ministers and people. It brings vividly before the mind a great many facts which ought to be more frequently and seriously considered than they are, and presents them, too, in a light that will attract attention and make an impression. *Ministers would do well to encourage its circulation, as a means of preventing or counteracting many of the causes which often exert a most pernicious influence in the field of their labors. Every one* who wishes success to the ministry, and harmony, peace and prosperity in the churches, might do something to accomplish this object, *by directing attention to this work.*

From Rev. Edward Beecher, D. D., of Boston.

In my opinion, the work entitled "A VOICE FROM THE PARSONAGE," is adapted *to do great good*, and *deserves* a general circulation among the churches. It is true to nature and to facts, and will convey not only *pleasure*, but *important instruction*, to all who read it. All Congregational churches need great wisdom and piety in order to avoid the evils and temptations incident to their system, and to develop its true excellencies unobscured. This work is adapted to aid them in obtaining these indispensable qualifications. I therefore cordially recommend it to general acceptance and favor.

From Rev. Edmund Dowse, Pastor of the Church in Sherborn.

Having examined the book entitled "A VOICE FROM THE PARSONAGE," I am prepared to say, that though the last of the works issued from the press on the same general subject, it is by no means the least. It not only occupies new ground, but it meets evils that have not been noticed, and avoids objections that have been found in previous publications. On the whole, I regard it *the best book of the kind, both for the ministry and the people.*

From the Boston Evening Transcript.

This volume is dedicated to Sidney B. Morse, Esq., by his former pastor and friend. The author designs to aid in counteracting the great evil of changing the pastoral relation for any slight cause. He says the plan and general features of the book were conceived and drawn out many months ago, and before any other work with the slightest resemblance to it was known. The volume contains sketches of various incidents peculiar to the career of a clergyman, who sustains the relation of pastor to a parish. It gives quite an insight into social life at a parsonage, and the voice it utters is worthy the attention of all well wishers of those who pass their lives in the ministry.

From the Boston Daily Advertiser.

The book details the course of a minister of the noblest character, walking through his path of Christian duty in the most exemplary manner, and aided by a faithful wife to do all that a Christian family can be expected to do in the position of the pastor of a church. The picture is filled out with other excellent characters, the Squire and his wife, and others who aid the minister along his path, and do what they can to render it pleasant. But as there was a serpent in the garden of Eden, so in this parish were there wicked and slanderous persons who undermine the pastor in the affections of many of his people, and do not end till he is compelled to leave the parish where he has passed the best years of his life. The details of his connection with his parish, his successes and his failures are drawn with minuteness, and frequently with considerable

power and pathos. The picture is a painful one, and we would fain hope has been somewhat heightened, as is allowable "to point a moral, and adorn a tale." But the lessons should be carefully pondered, and may serve to check a reckless spirit of gossip, which is often thoughtlessly indulged in, without any idea of the evil consequences which may follow an "idle word," which is perhaps forgotten as soon as spoken.

The work will be read with interest, though often a painful one. It is well written, and contains natural descriptions of a great variety of character, and many valuable hints may be taken from it in all classes of society.

From the Puritan Recorder, Boston.

This book is aimed particularly at that great and growing evil—the easy and frequent disruption of the tie that binds a minister to his people. Though it takes the form of a story, consisting very much of conversations between different individuals, it contains nothing that *may* not be true to the letter, and nothing which, if it should be stated as fact, would be regarded as at all extraordinary. The evil which it contemplates is a fearful one, and the author deserves well of the Christian public at large, for this timely and ingenious effort to arrest it.

From the Middlesex Journal.

We have read this volume with great interest, and regard it as well fitted to do great good in all our parishes. All sides of the subject are here presented. Not only is the life of the pastor, in his trials and joys, delineated, but the case of the parishioner is also described. The author does not blame the parishioner for all the evils which often befall the pastor, but justly, in many instances, throws the responsibility on the pastor himself. We regard the volume as well worthy a place in every family, and advise all readers to get a copy and read it.

From the Mother's Assistant, Boston.

This is the work, after all, which our parishes need. Wherever it shall be read, its influence will be most salutary. It will help the good pastor, and his good wife, too; and where there is an inefficient or selfish pastor, his parishioners will be comforted in its perusal. We like the book much, and deem it a very honest and fair echo of a voice from the parsonage. We advise all our readers to obtain a copy. Its circulation in all our parishes would be attended with the most beneficial results

---

From the Congregationalist, Boston.

This work seems to be characterized by a conscientious desire to portray, with photographic fidelity, the reality of life in the ministry. It is

more complete, and more exhaustive of its subject, than any other work of its class, which has fallen under our eye. Certain very important topics which have been overlooked before, are here brought out with force and fulness. The tone of the book is simple, unartistic and experimental. It makes upon us the impression of having been written—not by a professedly fine writer for the sake of making a fine book, but rather as one might write an autobiography for some purpose of general usefulness. It can hardly be read without the feeling that Virgil's "*quaeque ipse miserrima vidi, et quorum pars magna fui,*" would be its most truthful motto. We have been, in our time, both a country minister and the son of a country minister, and we can bear testimony to the essential truthfulness of the story. "The other store," "the load of wood," "the letter," &c., are especially veracious chapters. We think this book is calculated to do extensive good.

From Rev. Mr. Huntington's Monthly, Boston.

The purpose of the work, clearly, is to exhibit the mischiefs and sins which are likely to attend any relation between a minister and his people that is not thoroughly generous and fair on both sides. The subtle processes by which an immoral and destructive policy creeps into this relation,—the meannesses that may disgrace the parochial character, the disorganizing power of a few factious malcontents, the fatal growth of suspicion and ill-will, the errors of well-meaning pastors, are all graphically described. The narrative, though simple and straight-forward, is not without a strong and painful interest. If a large predominance is given to difficulties of a pecuniary nature, it is probably because these difficulties have really grown, in many places, into the most serious importance. In this regard, the book does for the recent "Statement of Facts," issued from Boston, disclosing the financial disabilities of the New England clergy, what a set of plates does for a scientific treatise, or a series of colored engravings for a work of physical geography. There is certainly instruction in it. The story has a life-like air; and many readers will here find entertaining portraits of personages they have personally known, and individual names for generic foibles. Col. Presby and Miss Bemis represent facts which have sorely tried many a minister's Christian patience.

Date Due

Library Bureau Cat. no. 1137

MEADVILLE LOMBARD THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL
BV4014 .P21 MAIN
/A voice from the parsonage: or, Life in
3 5701 00039 9958

he parsonage

29782

UED TO